
ACTORVIEWS

ASHTON STEVENS



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ACTORVIEWS

Intimate Portraits by
ASHTON STEVENS

With Drawings by
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To
DOCTOR A. H. WATERMAN

Table of Contents

The First Gentleman of the Theater.	1
Arnold Daly's Darling Daughter.	9
A Duel or Two for Mr. Ditrichstein.	15
Angel Cake with Miss Ferguson.	23
Heart Interest and Mr. A. H. Woods.	29
Why God Loves the Irish.	37
A Rube Aphrodite.	43
The Gravest Fault of Sir Herbert Tree.	49
The Double Life of Ina Claire.	55
Jack and John Barrymore.	61
The Duncan Sisters and Royalty.	69
Mr. Craven's Lighted First Night.	75
Miss and Mrs. Janis.	81
Mr. Collier Under Oath.	87
Miss Barrymore and the Wits.	97
The Twenty-second Street Ziegfeld.	101
The Second Wind of Mrs. Leslie Carter.	107
Consistently Savoy and Brennan.	113
That Adorable Laurette Taylor.	119
Louis Wolheim, Ph.D.	125
Miss O'Ramey Concentrates.	131
Why Managers Don't Love Mr. Bennett.	137
When Sophie Tucker Kissed a Critic.	141

TABLE OF CONTENTS—(CONTINUED)

Goodwin and Daly—Mostly Daly.	147
Miss Moores and Her Mamma.	153
Mr. Warfield Declines a Million.	159
The Girl from Colosimo's.	165
Mr. Arliss Speaks of Mr. Archer.	173
My Favorite Leading Lady.	181
Mr. Jolson Acts Up for His Bride.	185
Melting the Ice with Lynn Fontanne.	193
"Hitchy."	201
Twenty-Thousand-Dollar Legs.	209
Sothern and Marlowe.	215
Fanny and I and the Baby.	221
Bert William's Last Interview.	227
When Justine Johnson Was Natural.	233
Imperial Morris Gest.	243
Alone at Last with Helen Hayes.	249
Nora Bayes on Lovers.	255
Lynn Overman's Long Rehearsal.	263
The Self-Doubting Pauline Lord.	271
Brownie and Bunny of "The Follies."	277
Breakfast with a Perfect Lady.	285
Making It Up with the Bordoni.	289
Luck and Frank Bacon.	295
An Unprintable Interview with Miss Cowl.	303
Ambushing the First Actress.	309
Index	319

ACTORVIEWS

. . . I have written five hundred interviews with players and been surprised in four hundred of them. I ought to be able to, but I can't—to save me I can't—tell you why certain people tell me certain things. I can only tell you how they tell these things; which is perhaps all that is required of me. But there are times when I should like to be less of a reporter and more of a psychologist. . . .



The First Gentleman of the Theater



MET John Drew on West Madison street the other day, when he was searching the signs for a moving picture containing his nephew, Lionel Barrymore, and, strangely enough, called "The Face in the Fog." It was on Madison street between Clark and Dearborn, and I was thinking how few beautiful women you see in that crowded section of Chicago, and what unpressed-looking men (I'd just had my gloves cleaned and was feeling rather superior)—when, lo! my bored retina was rejoiced by the reflection of a gentleman whose trousers did not spring at the knee and whose coat might have been tailored especially for himself. I recognized John Drew's impressive wear before I recognized John Drew.

I hooked arms, not unprudently, with my distinguished friend and joined him in the search; but neither his thick lenses nor my medium ones could find a sign of the sign of Lionel, so we started to walk to a little arts-and-letters club in Michigan avenue, of which we are both members. But before we had reached its modest portal I was stricken with an idea, and I communicated it.

"John," I said, "I know your aversion to newspaperiety, and I respect you for it—but think of me! Why can't I once in an age sit down and talk out an

interview with an actor I really know and really admire and——”

“Don’t go too far!” said Mr. Drew. But he listened to reason.

I flagged a cab—John Drew does not walk so briskly as he did twenty-five or fifty years ago—and as we climbed into it he said:

“What’s the matter? Aren’t you well? You’ve spoiled about a mile of my walk.”

And when I stopped in the drug store under his hotel and ordered a kola, he testily observed, “I should hope I’d be able to do a little better than that for you upstairs!” He was charged with dry humor as well as the damper hospitalities.

I remember, I would not take the big stuffed chair, preferring to lounge at length on his padded window seat. And when finally he reluctantly did take it, it was to caricature the whole blooming institution of the actorial interview by saying, and saying as only John Drew can:

“‘Yes,’ replied the famous actor, as he reclined in the easiest chair in his magnificent Blackstone apartment and spoke substantially as follows:”!

He tried to find a letter for me—it doesn’t matter, in fact I’ve forgotten, what the letter was about—but it was good to hear him “dash the souls” of all tidying chambermaids. And when somebody’s name came up—again I forget, but it was the name of somebody between fifty and one hundred years of age—Mr. Drew said that this party was “older than God.” Only, of course, he didn’t say “party”; that would be blasphemous language for John Drew.

And this prompted me to ask him how old an

actor must be before he begins to brag instead of lie about his age.

Mr. Drew didn't seem to know just how old; his gesture made it incalculable. "But it's all damn rot, this trying to conceal your age," he barked, who would be seventy on his next birthday. "They've got you in 'Who's Who' and the newspaper almanacs—and they've always got you right. I mean the almanacs, not the newspapers themselves. There was a paragraph in a New York paper the other day that said—it ought to be here on the desk, but those women have tidied it out of sight, dash their sweet souls!"

"Never mind looking, John. What did it say—substantially?"

"Said that next March I'd celebrate my fifty-ninth year on the stage. Hell, fiftieth is enough!"

"I should say! And today you don't—honest to heaven, John—look more than that many years old. I'm almost tempted to ask you how you've done it."

"That's what an old fellow was asking me the other night. 'I know you're two weeks older than God,' he said, 'because you keep looking younger. How do you do it?'"

"I told him. I told him that I never sat up late," smiled the habitually nocturnal Mr. Drew, stirring the brown stimulant from the bottom of his glass, "and never drank anything."

And we fell to talking about acting, and I asked him who is ever the most modern of the comedians of manners if, during the long years of achievement, there had been any conscious and calculated change in his method of attacking a so-called modern part. "You are, and always have been," I said, "contemporary."

"I haven't realized any change of method," he

answered. "I suppose one progresses or else is called an old-timer. The actor who can't keep pace with events and permutations becomes an old-timer, poor devil!"

"And I wish you'd tell me," I said, "what's the matter with so many of the young-timers of our stage. Why haven't we some young John Drews coming up?"

"Come! Come!" he scoffed the question.

"I mean this. We can get a lot of young women to play ladies without making a profound character study of the job. Why can't we get more of the same kind of young men for the stage?"

"Well," said John Drew, measuredly, "you see, a lot of young men who might make good actors prefer to go down to the Equitable Life and clean out ink wells. They know they'll only have to do that for a year, and then, possibly, with a rich father, be on the way to make a fortune. And fortunes aren't made on the stage," added one of our best bestowed histrions, looking up through his heavy glasses to encounter the entering presence of a recently dashed chambermaid.

"Is that you, Margaret?" he asked with kindness.

"No, sir; it's Grace." And Mr. Drew gave some friendly order to Grace, who was ample, who was middle-aged, who was as respectable looking as the First National Bank.

"You'll suspect nothing between me and Grace, I hope," said Mr. Drew when she departed. "And I hope I shan't drink myself into indiscreet utterances."

"I'll protect you. And you didn't," I admitted, "chuck her under the chin."

"Eighteenth century!" said Mr. Drew, and wondered if anybody ever did chuck anybody under the

chin—save on the stage—and if any woman ever was the “toast of the town”—save in a play.

“John, how far back do you remember the stage?”

“Oh, I remember as a boy going to see Charlotte Cushman play *Meg Merrilies*,” he said, as casually as you’d say you remembered Bernhardt as *Camille*.

But, casually as he said it, I couldn’t help thinking that Cushman was born in 1816, and that somehow this not-at-all-aged gentleman had contacts with a century ago. For a minute I felt that I must not call him John, no matter how affectionately meant; it didn’t sound quite respectful. But only for a minute.

Then one of the hotel valets came in and hung up a suit of tweeds, and my host observed that he must be a very disorderly person to require so much pressing. Speaking of which, he remarked a line in “The Circle” which struck him as being peculiar—the line where Mr. Lawford’s character observes of Mr. Drew’s that, “He wore his clothes better than any man in London.”

“Curious thing,” he said, “for one Englishman of that class to say about another. They rather take that sort of thing as a matter of course.”

“It is rather American,” said I, and reminded John Drew of the days when what he wore was almost as important a matter of news as what he acted. And I thought that what he wore now was no bad tribute to the fading art of dandyism, as I noted the subtle harmonies of his brown homespun, pink-striped collar, wine-colored handkerchief (in the pocket, not the cuff!) and olive tie with its counterpoints of pink. But I kept my thoughts, and, as I say, recalled the days when the product of his tailor rivaled the product of his playwright. To which John Drew said, laughing, that

he remembered the time George Ade wrote of a man coming down the street in John Drew scenery.

"Maugham's a funny card," he went on, speaking with admiration of his and Mrs. Leslie Carter's present author. "He has an impediment in his speech; and he had a country place near mine during the war. One day he told me that his government had instructed him to go to Russia on some diplomatic business, some business that would require a lot of talking. And as he stammered this I thought: 'You'll be good—even in French—in Russia!' Brilliant fellow, Maugham. I remember him once saying to me—I think it was when I was doing 'Smith'—'I expect you to soothe and comfort my declining years by playing my pieces.'"

"When is it you complete your fiftieth year on the stage—this month?" I inquired carelessly.

"God, no!" exploded John Drew. "I'm not now completing, I'm only entering, my fiftieth year—I shan't complete it till some time in March, 1923. It was in 1873 I went on the stage, being then," he whimsically appended, "a moonish youth of nineteen."

"Have a cigar?" he was saying.

"Is it a genuine John Drew?"

"I'm afraid it's only a Corona," he said, and I accepted.

"Did you ever smoke your namesake?"

"I shouldn't go that far! But I was once presented with two boxes, with my picture inside the lid, wearing a jig-saw mustache. I gave one to my servant, and he promptly gave me notice. And in Cleveland I was waited on, in the rotunda of the hotel, by a deputation of cigar makers, who informed me that the brand bearing my name was not union made, and

wanted to know what I was going to do about it. I referred them to my lawyers."

"You got no royalties for the name and the jigsaw mustache?"

"No; not even a request for permission. I got nothing but fame out of the John Drew cigar." And he didn't seem an hour over fifty as he laughed it.

"Give me," I said, as he walked with me to the elevator, "give me a recipe for being fifty at sixty-nine!"

"I'll give you an infallible one: Keep the hair on and the stomach off."

"Fine! Good-by, John."

"God bless!" he chopped.

Arnold Daly's Darling Daughter



WE WENT to supper after she had finished her night's work, which was acting at the Playhouse the thirteen-year-old little Cockney dear in "Happy-Go-Lucky"; we went to supper just like a couple of grown-ups. But before I gave her an opportunity to decline my cigarets I asked one question. I asked, "How old are you, Miss Daly?"

"I was nineteen on the fifth of December," she said, "but you can make me eighteen if you want to—actresses are always made younger in their interviews, aren't they? But, of course, if anyone wanted to check up, the deception would be discovered. My mother is only thirty-seven—and divine; and as much of the world as cares to know knows that she married father when she was sixteen and that I was born in . . . whatever year it was . . . I'm trying my best to forget. . . . Do you," she leaned over the table and asked me above the racket of the world's loudest organist, "know my divine mother?"

"No, I'm sorry to say; but I do know all your sainted papas."

"All of them!" She laughed a little gurgling laugh that rippled her tomboyish features. "There's only two. There's Dad; he's my step-father, Frank Craven. And there's Father; he's Arnold Daly, my parental progenitor. Mother and I always say we divorced Father in 1900 and married Dad in 1914."

A modern child, this little daughter of divorce; and when I said, "Are you hungry?" the modern child replied, "I had dinner with friends, and that always makes me hungry." So we gave the waiter quite a talk.

Blythe Daly has a vocabulary, speaking words that writers only write. She has her father's English vocabulary and her mother's French; she is uncannily bilingual. Her face and fair coloring are her father's over again, even to the blinking twinkle of the gray-blue eyes; and like her father, she talks with all her vowels and all her countenance; talks athletically, musically, beautifully. Sometimes she reminds you of Mrs. Patrick Campbell in a series of melodious explosions; but on the whole she has more legato; and breathes so well that you never know when; breathes like a bird.

She was presently trilling for me a letter she had recently written to Mr. Daly, who had reproached her for describing herself his "sincerely": " 'Though I admire you immensely and glory in your name,' I wrote to Father, 'I couldn't very well sign myself with the proverbial prodigal-child love and kisses for someone I scarcely knew, simply because he happened to be the more or less unwilling, certainly unsuspecting, and up to now quite unconscious author of my being.' "

"Repeat that!" I cried.

She did, and I wrote it down, vowing that a man should take a stenographer to an interview with Blythe Daly, if not two.

"Child, where did you learn to talk?"

"I have a brilliant mother," she brilliantly answered. "Mother lies in bed and reads Emerson's lectures to me. Then I've been brought up in part by

Uncle Jack, who is John Drew, and Aunt Bee, who is Uncle Jack's daughter Louise and mother's best friend. I've been," she smiled, "surrounded by every influence but the paternal."

"Where do you Dalys get your round, ripe Irish articulation? It's like Rose Coghlan's."

"Well, my mother is half French, half Italian, and the other half Scotch and my father is all good Brooklyn Irish."

"Have you got Father's temperament?"

"I hope not. The first story I ever heard of myself was of Aunt Bee coming in and finding me, at the age of five, in my tub, but with all the graces of the perfect hostess. 'How's your mother?' says she. 'Fine,' says I. 'And your father?' 'Still fighting with his managers,' says I . . . I hope I haven't the Daly temperament; if ever I lose my temper people will say, 'What else could you expect from Arnold Daly's daughter!' and if I ever do a clever piece of acting he'll get the credit for that, too."

"Have another pastry?"

"No, thanks; I must think of the waistline."

"How long have you been on the stage?"

"Aha! this is where Miss Daly talks of her career! The question sounds like a real interview and I am terrifically thrilled. This is my first, you know, and I'm dying of excitement. I've always been told that being interviewed is like going to confession, or having your fortune told, in that it gives you such an opportunity to talk about yourself—and Self is a subject on which the Dalys are unparalleled. . . . But to answer your fascinating question—I've been on the stage two years. I've played in fourteen plays in twenty months. Some of my parts had one line, others

were just noises off stage—it was anything to be on the stage. Better shift scenery in a real theater than go to a dramatic school.”

“What good part besides this have you played?”

“In ‘9:45’ I was the ruined maid for seventy-five dollars a week—jumped from twenty-five, and I adored it. I told myself, ‘The old girl’s coming quite along!’ Then I skipped from the ruined maid to this child of thirteen in ‘Happy-Go-Lucky.’ A long life but exciting.”

“What does your father think of this performance of yours?”

“My dear man, Father’s never seen me act. He should be bothered! Oh, yes, once when we were rehearsing this play in New York he came round, but I chased him away.”

“How’d you like your father’s performance in ‘The Tavern’?”

“I haven’t seen it; I haven’t even seen Lowell Sherman’s performance in ‘The Tavern.’ The last, in fact, the only time I ever saw Father act was when he made a revival in 1914 of ‘You Never Can Tell’—which reminds me that I wound up my letter to him with one of *Dolly’s* lines from that comedy: ‘We mean well, Mr. Crampstones, but we’re not yet strong in the filial line.’”

“How’d you like Father’s acting in 1914?” I persevered.

“I — don’t — know.” She seemed puzzled; she laughed eerily.

“What impression did you get?”

“My strongest impression was that he made too many faces. Which sounds like a snippy child trying to get a laugh at her parent’s expense. And that isn’t the idea. The idea—if I can explain it—is that Father’s acting was so notoriously good, according to experts,

that I accepted it as something I'd always known. . . . just as I accepted and was prepared for the acting of Mary Garden. But Father did seem to make a great many faces. I hope that isn't what you mean when you say the Dalys talk with their faces, else I shall at once begin to curb my galloping features. . . . All words lead to oneself in an interview, don't they? I remind myself of Father. He sent me the other day proof sheets of a review he is writing for *The Bookman* of Nathan's latest volume of dramatic criticisms. Immediately I read them I telegraphed him: 'Found well written your review of Nathan's book, only don't you think a little more of the subject and a little less of you would be more to the point?' . . . If I seem to scatter all over the place, you must make allowances for my excitement at my first interview . . . although once, when I was four, I was quoted in the press. Somebody said, 'You're a blonde, Blythe, aren't you?' To which I answered, 'No, I'm a Catholic.' . . . So you're an old friend of Father's, Mr. Stevens. Well, I'm glad you're not a lovely lady."

"So'm I, Miss Daly; but why are you glad?"

"Oh, all my life I've met lovely ladies who've been dear old friends of Father's. And they've always said, with ecstasy: 'I knew your father! But you're not like him. He's wonderful!' It's a favorite phrase of mother's and mine, 'I knew your father.' The lovely ladies who've been dear friends of Father's are all alike—all but one—all but Mary Garden. I met her when she was rehearsing 'Aphrodite' here at the Auditorium. She didn't roll her eyes and sigh that she'd known my father. Mary Garden said:

"'You are Mr. Daly's daughter? How is poppa?"

"And I loved her 'How is poppa?' I took her into

my confidence and told her my earliest childhood's recollection, which was of a gold toilet set on my father's dresser and above it in a huge gold frame a portrait of Mary Garden as *Thais*. I told her how the children had been bragging at school, one saying, 'My father gave me a French doll that walks,' and another saying, 'My father gave me an automobile that goes,' and how I thought I capped them all when I cried, 'My father knows Mary Garden and has her picture in a gold frame!' How Mary Garden laughed and relished it! She is not like Father's other lovely ladies . . . Is there anything I've left undiscussed?"

"These Chinese preserved fruits; and," I reminded her, "they were your idea."

"I know, and I'm sorry, but I daren't taste them," the modern child replied. "I must think of the old waistline—it's much harder to get it off than to keep it off. Look at my gifted sire's waistline and think of my possibilities."

A Duel or Two for Mr. Ditrichstein



AM sure that Leo Ditrichstein's mind was far from the field of honor and singing bullets exchanged at dawn.

His single wound is remembered by a tiny nick in the rim of the right ear—a slight souvenir of peppery days in the Old world that does not pretend to be a barometer, that does not painfully signal the approach of every April rainfall.

It was not the weather that reminded him.

And the American citizenship of this once hectic son of Hungary is an old matter now, a matter of twenty-five years.

So neither was it the thought that but for a bit of lead landed in the anatomy of a German antagonist he would not be here, the Great Lover of the American stage, the eternal Don Juan of our sophisticated comedy.

I have written five hundred interviews with players and been surprised in four hundred of them. I ought to be able to, but I can't—to save me I can't—tell you why certain people tell me certain things. I can only tell you how they tell these things; which is perhaps all that is required of me. But there are times when I should like to be less of a reporter and more of a psychologist. . . .

And, as I say, I'm quite sure that Mr. Ditrichstein had not the remotest notion of telling me how a European duel made him into an American actor when he and his American wife and I walked from Cohan's Grand to a cafe around the corner—where the beer is faultless (for him as likes beer), and the Danish sandwiches fit for jolly old Ibsen himself, and the favorite table not too near the bandstand.

I was telling them of the lady near whom I sat during the performance of "The King," who had been telling another lady that Mr. Ditrichstein was just as wicked a rake off the stage as on.

They smiled at this doubtless old story. And without any great effort on his part Mr. Ditrichstein contrived to look like anybody but Don Juan when he removed his brown hat from a pate as hairless as the billiard ball of platitude.

Behold him a quiet, unfrilled man of family, taking his beer in a quiet restaurant corner with quite his own wife. Nobody stared, or should have. He might have been a doctor of medicine or the editor of *The Atlantic Monthly*.

Mrs. Leo is not only not a lady of the stage, but she does not look like a lady of the stage (as so many lay wives of active actors do). Her hair is white, her powder-puff put by these several years. She luxuriates in elegant middle age. She has the courage of her humor, and declares herself without stint in four languages.

Something had displeased Mrs. Leo this night. It may have been her husband. She forgot to say.

I say "forgot," because Mrs. Leo has no secrets. The Leo Ditrichsteins have the grand manner in that they say what they think with a frankness that is subtly flattering to the listener.

"We have no secrets, no debts, and our life is open to the world," Mrs. Leo declared, after she had confessed to being in a mood of displeasure.

"To be a good liar you've got to be smart, be clever—and smart, clever people bore me; they're so obvious."

And Mr. Leo, half of whose business is to write half the clever lines he utters from the stage, assented with a twinkle in his nearest fun-loving eye. He has small eyes that sometimes grin.

"Leo isn't a liar," Mrs. Leo went on; "he hates a liar as I do—but you can't believe anything he says."

"I say!" he mildly protested.

"If he says he'll go out tomorrow, you can bank on his spending the whole day at home. If he solemnly promises me not to play the races, he'll go out and lose five thousand dollars." The wives of racing men, I murmured to myself, never reproach them with their winnings.

What I said aloud was: "Artists are all born gamblers."

"Leo is a born dirty gambler," said Mrs. Leo, delightfully. "He took me to Monte Carlo and promised to play just once—twenty francs——"

"Tell that story and I'll tell the part that's on you!" he warned.

"I'll tell it myself," she flared. "But not till I've told how you bet on the zero at roulette, and won thirty-six times your wager, and I dragged you out of the place by main strength.

"But he wouldn't be contented to stay away a winner. All day he pleaded to go back to the tables, and of course we finally went back that evening. He had on a soft hat with the brim well down around his bald head. My white hair was cheerfully exposed."

"But I had on a soft collar; that was what barred me," spoke Mr. Leo, elfishly. "But the man said it was all right for my mother."

"Meaning me," sniffed Mrs. Leo. "And Leo was wild because he couldn't go inside and lose his winnings and more. He has a frightful temper. What was it, Leo, you threw when you got angry in your dressing-room tonight?"

"My trousers," was the simple answer.

Can you see the Great Lover madly tossing his trousers? I could not—somehow—then.

We talked of the three great lover parts he had already played—in the play of that title, in "The Concert," and now the most Don Giovannian of them all in "The King"—and Mrs. Leo allowed that there is an actor who plays such rôles with conviction.

"She usually reads my letters to me while I'm making up," said he.

"Not the bad ones, Leo.—Never such a one as would churn him up and spoil his performance. Only the flattering ones," said this most truly helpful of great men's helpmates.

"I read to him the notes of soft ladies who archly set down their telephone numbers and the hours at which their husbands are not at home."

Mr. Leo objected with his nose.

"Oh, they are not all perfumed. Some of them would, I dare say, be quite interesting—if I didn't get them first."

"Yes, once in a while one gets a rise from one's wife," smiled Mr. Leo.

"Is it you, Mrs. Leo," I asked, "who won't let him wear his toupee out of the theater?"

"Me! I want him to wear a toupee all the time,

but he won't. What fun do you think it is for me to go around with a bald-headed man who's always afraid of getting his head in a draft?

Mr. Leo dryly recited the "wig speech" from Calderon's "The Judge of Zalamea," wherein it is set forth that a man who suddenly grows hair advertises for admiration none but his wig-maker. And Mrs. Leo came down with:

"But Leo carries his physical honesty too far. He won't even wear false teeth—not even on the stage. Where two of his teeth are missing shows every time he laughs."

Mr. Leo laughed to prove it.

"I simply couldn't wear artificial dentistry," he solemnly declared.

"Why, when I thought he was going to die," Mrs. Leo testified, "the last time we were abroad, and the surgeon wanted to cut out his appendix, Leo says: 'No. If I'm going to die, I'm going to die whole!'"

"But of course he didn't die, and the bill was quite as large as if he'd had the operation. Leo has no sense of economy."

And for a minute Mrs. Leo and I shamelessly speculated on what quality in him it is that won't let him go to a dentist and have a couple of teeth restored. It couldn't be this, it couldn't be that——

"And of course," I said, "it couldn't be a question of physical courage, since Mr. Ditrichstein once—so I have heard—fought a duel."

"I've heard that, more or less vaguely, myself," said Mrs. Leo, interested. "Did you ever fight a duel, Leo?"

"My dear," very quietly, "I fought two."

"I'll bet some woman was involved."

"Two women," her husband corrected. "There is always a woman at the bottom of a duel."

"You devil! . . . Well? Go on! Don't leave us hanging here by our teeth."

"My dear, I can't tell you the silly adventure that brought about the first one. Enough to say that I did not know the lady was engaged to the gentleman—an artillery officer. However . . . when he lifted his riding cap and threatened to strike me over the face, I punched out hard and hit him a good one.

"The affair came before the court of honor, or whatever you call it, and we were to exchange three shots at ten or a dozen paces. I remember the referee was a short-legged chap; and when he was measuring off the ground one of the seconds cried out to him, 'Jump, man! For God's sake, jump!' His short legs were giving us a rather close range.

"For each shot the referee was to count slowly from one to five. We could shoot any time within the count. I let go my first shot quick and wide—I didn't want to kill a man.

"But he took his time, this artillerist, and a good aim, while I stood there with a discharged pistol in my hand. I heard the whizz of the bullet and felt something—there—on my ear. He'd grazed me, and I was bleeding; but it wasn't serious enough to have us stopped.

"You may be sure I was taking no chances on the second shot. I felt that it was my life or his." Mr. Leo's little eyes for a moment glinted. "I gritted my teeth and shot straight to the line and got him in the leg. That finished it."

"How had you spent the night?" I asked.

"Walking the floor. It was my *début*. And he was an artillery officer trained to arms."

"Did you write any letters home?"

"No."

"Write home and let his father know? and catch

a good licking? That wouldn't be Leo," said Mrs. Leo. "How old were you?"

"Twenty-two. And that abruptly terminated my engagement in Linz, where I was playing."

"Who was the other jade you fought over?"

"She wasn't, my dear. We were almost, if not quite, engaged. I had taken her to a jeweler's for a ring, and the talkative jeweler had done the rest.

"At any rate, when a man she knew brought several uninvited and unwelcome persons to her house one day—imposing on her because she was a woman of the stage—I told the man what I thought of him. I exercised my rights as a fiancé and got challenged.

"It was the same old story of six in the morning with pistols at ten or a dozen paces—I forget—and dark clothes and our collars turned up so as not to show any white for a mark. But this time I had played cards all night, instead of walking the floor—I was becoming accustomed.

"And I shot him in the arm at the first shot—and left Hamburg very quickly. In fact, my dear, that's what brought me to this country—and to you."

"Well, Leo, this is the first time I've ever heard that. But it's just like you!"

"Do you still believe in the Code?" I asked this quiet, bald-headed gentleman.

"The last time I expressed myself on that subject it cost me a thousand dollars," he said with an air of unutterable disgust. "The man in Connecticut to whom I addressed a challenge turned it over to the police—and I was fined!"

"Don't talk about it!" cried Mrs. Leo.

And Mr. Leo didn't. He had finished—dramatically—artistically—just as the doused lights of the café signaled the hour of closing.

Angel Cake With Miss Ferguson



MISS ELSIE FERGUSON'S lovely face was almost as close to me as the paper on which I am writing, and a clear light beat upon it from the windows of her drawing-room at the Ambassador (I can think of twenty beautiful actresses whose faces it were an indiscretion to expose to such a light) and yet her face was more surpassingly lovely than ever before.

She is more delicately beautiful than stage or screen may show. The infantine clearness of her skin can't be counterfeited and projected with makeup; there is a note of coral in her live, bronze hair that dies in the fires of the footlights. And her mouth, that might have been cut by a hand that molded Elgin marbles, slightly droops its left lower lip, when you are close enough to see, in a way that is ridiculous and adorable. And her pensive blue eyes, under their classic arches, are a little tired, whether from looking too much out at the world or in on oneself, I do not know; perhaps both. Her nose, which with a little encouragement might have turned up at the tip, is not classical, thank God; but I have yet to know that this exquisite organ denotes a sense of humor.

"Miss Ferguson," I said, from my seat on the couch in whose soft corners we were bestowed, "is it beauty or brains that has made you what you are in the theater?"

It is a combination of both, if I may say so," she answered in that deliberate, earnest way of hers.

We spoke frankly of her beauty; as frankly as we should have spoken of the beauty of a picture she had painted or a flower she had grown.

"Looks," she presently went on, speaking slowly, and the process of thinking slowly indicated by the formation of two thin parallel depressions that ran, like an etcher's lines, from brow to nose—"looks are a great asset to a girl just starting out to be an actress. The public and the managers are predisposed in favor of the attractive girl. Looks will very often get her her chance. But looks alone will take her only so far. I never placed my real reliance on mine."

"You relied more on what's called the temperament for the stage?"

"I believe I have a very emotional nature," she returned gravely. "Oh, not one that spills over for every sentimental triviality—not now, at any rate," and she smiled wearily. "Emotions come to the surface quicker when one is young than when the years have gone by; and I have remembered my emotions, and, you might say, stored them for my work."

"You remember how you felt when you were sixteen?"

"Of course! What girl doesn't? I remember how I thought of love, how I fell in love, when I was sixteen—what girl doesn't? It was a thrill that filled every thought; nothing but love mattered. And I have," she smilingly sighed, "found the memory of it very helpful in playing that act of 'The Varying Shore' in which *Julie* is sixteen. I've tried to recreate from memory and give *Julie* some of those old (poor abused word!) 'vibrations.' I've even tried to remember and reproduce the unformed way in which a girl of sixteen speaks."

She smoked her small cigarette silently a moment, and I was silent, too. I didn't know what she was thinking about, but I was thinking about her beauty and—and at my time of life!—inwardly breathing poetry:

"Was this the face that launch'd a thousand ships?"

Now I knew what she had been thinking about with those pretty puckered lines above her nose and the left lower lip drooped.

"When a girl is sixteen," she said, musically and with careful phrase, "she has illusions and ideals."

"Still thinking of her *Julie*!" thought I.

"When she is twenty-nine," the sweet voice droned, "she still has her ideals, but her illusions are gone."

"The next step will be forty," I said to myself, "and I'm glad she thinks of *Julie*; for I should hate to think of eternal Elsie Ferguson thinking of herself as forty—the realism would be sordid!"

"And when she is forty," said Miss Elsie, with the low beat in her voice, "both ideals and illusions are gone."

"What about when she's ninety?" I brightly asked.

"When she's ninety—as I am supposed to be in one scene of 'The Varying Shore'—then I remember my mother—her tears held back, her muscles controlled. Oh, oh, I almost forgot the angel cake! Don't tell me you don't love angel cake!"

Of course I couldn't tell her I don't love angel cake; so we had some with our tea. Mine was such a fat piece that I said it was a bribe; but my levity had no great success. I don't think lovely Elsie Ferguson likes levity.

Oh, I wish I could score for you here the beat and cadence of Elsie Ferguson's voice! Her words are cold, I find as I write them; and they leave one as cold as do many of the words in "The Varying Shore." It was her utterance of them that was warm, melodious, hypnotic—when her voice was like the G string of a Stradivarius.

I recall saying that she must be paying a handsome sum to act again behind a row of footlights, considering what the movies could afford to pay her and the stage couldn't.

"Yes," she assented, "and I'm also paying a handsome sum in an effort to make fewer and better pictures. I've cut my picture contract in half, making two or three pictures a season where I used to make six, or even eight." And even these details of her business, her voice put forth with beauty and with a slow but never painful rhythm.

And I remember that we talked of being a lady—and of projecting one across a row of footlights, which is quite another thing. I told her a story of Henry James, wherein a famous London illustrator (doubtless Du Maurier was his prototype) was induced to send away his professional models and have sit for his pictures of society a real lady and gentleman, whose circumstances, but not appearances, were, as the saying is, reduced. "The artist could do nothing with these unfortunate gentlefolk," I told Miss Ferguson, "so he hired back his professional models; and Henry James entitled the story, ironically enough, 'The Real Thing.'"

"No, I've never read that Henry James story," Miss Ferguson said, "but I can appreciate its point; and I can tell you something that may interest you: The next part I play shall not be a lady. She can be

anything else, but she mustn't be a lady. I feel I've specialized in ladies too long. There's a superstition abroad that I can't play anything else.

"A part doesn't interest me unless it's a challenge. I don't like the sure things of drama; and perhaps on that very account I sometimes make mistakes in choosing. But I like to play a woman who by experience and emotion has developed—up or down, it makes no difference so long as the development is there and she is true to herself."

"Does going into society fatigue you?"

"Something does, a great deal, and I am sleeping poorly; but I shouldn't blame it all on society." Only her tired eyes smiled.

"Shouldn't you delight in a society where there was no celebrated Elsie Ferguson, or rather," I corrected, "where everybody was an Elsie Ferguson? I mean," I went on, trying to make myself clear, "a society in which are gathered sculptors, painters, writers, beauties, scholars, wits, all of such distinction and acclaim that none would dare think himself or herself more important than his neighbor. Wouldn't it be a relief to lose self-consciousness in such a company?"

"Yes," said Elsie Ferguson, without passion. "It would be fine in such a society to put one's cards face up on the table and to talk, really talk, to split the very hairs of every subject."

And in the next breath she was telling me of the curious worship that comes to her unsought, especially through the pictures. She told me of a girl of fourteen, unknown to her, who had come up to her in the lobby of a theater where "Forever" was showing and had said, with tears streaming from her eyes, "Oh, it is you, Elsie! I love you so." (And will you believe me when I tell you that Miss Ferguson's recital of this

"I love you so!" which had been addressed to her by a child in the lobby of a movie theater, was so palpitably dramatic as to thrill me from spine to tear duct?) She had, Miss Ferguson told me, embraced the girl, and had got to know her mother and her father, and was of the belief that the girl would, if it were in her power, do anything in the world for the actress she had idealized and then realized.

That was what she said to me in the next breath; and it seemed to tell me that Elsie Ferguson, of the screen and of the stage, is even to herself the same romantic Elsie Ferguson she was to the stranger child. She not only acts and makes negatives of this romantic character, but she lives and believes it. It seemed to tell me that rich imagination and perfect beauty and lovely play-acting may be independent of a sense of humor.

Heart Interest and Mr. A. H. Woods



MY APPOINTMENT with Mr. A. H. Woods was for eight o'clock at the Blackstone Hotel.

At seven-thirty the news went whanging through Chicago that his new playhouse—the about-to-be-opened Woods Theater—had been bombed at its Dearborn street entrance.

I heard this news at seven fifty-five.

"A fine time," thought I, "to expect to find a manager sitting at home waiting for me to come up and take his interview for a Sunday newspaper."

And then it occurred to me that "Al" Woods has among his kind a curious reputation for always paying his bets. And I continued on my way to the hotel, and Mr. Woods kept his engagement. He was waiting for me. As far as I am concerned, his reputation for paying his bets is safe forevermore.

He was laughing when I got to the Blackstone.

And I had to laugh, too, when I heard what he had been telling the innocent gentlemen of the press who had asked him whom he suspected of trying to blow down the Woods Theater.

"I told them," he laughed, "that if it wasn't the Shuberts it was Klaw and Erlanger."

Then he said, "Let's go upstairs and talk before they blow it up again." And the millionaire producer

produced a couple of fifty-cent cigars that have advanced to sixty to pay the expenses of the War.

He led the way through a long bedroom to a longer living-room that was littered with the manuscripts of plays.

"My traveling companions," he said of them. "I once went to Europe with one collar. I had it on. But I always travel with a gripful of plays, sometimes a trunkful. You can buy fresh linen on shipboard easier than you can buy fresh 'scripts."

"How do you mean fresh 'scripts?" said I. . .

"I mean," he said, "that I'd always rather produce the play of an unknown author than of a guy that's had four or five successes. The successful playwright is always due for a failure. The unknown playwright—if his stuff is good enough to 'get' you in the reading—is always due for a success. With a new author there's a chance for a new idea."

"What's the first quality you look for in a manuscript?"

"Heart interest."

"In an actor?"

"Heart interest. If he hasn't got it here"—he touched his pocket handkerchief—"I'm off him for life."

"I just left a man who said, 'So you're going to see Al Woods! He's the greatest dice-shaking producer we've got.' Are you?"

And Mr. Woods, who talks and thinks, and no doubt dreams, in slang, said he didn't know what a "dice-shaking producer" meant.

"Are you a gambler?"

"Of course—I'm a business man."

"Do you believe in luck?"

"I believe in hunches—my own hunches." He talks like an etcher.

"How far will you go on one?"

"The cost of a production. Which cost, by the way, is usually exaggerated in the mind of the public. It only costs about twelve or fifteen thousand to produce the average play."

"What's your special 'hunch'?"

"I've only got one—my personal liking for a play. I've never produced a play I didn't like myself. And I never will—I don't care how high- or low-brow it may be—I don't care who says it's rotten.

"From the time I get my hunch for a manuscript till the night it's produced," he went on, "I'm interested. I get my cast, my scenes painted, oh, all the details. And then get my kick out of the game—my compensation—on the opening night."

"And then, if it's a success, you get your big thrills in watching it grow?"

"No!" said Mr. Woods to that amiable picture of himself. "That's not a bit like it. After its first performance I don't care a damn about the play."

"How did you come to strike out for yourself?"

"Heart interest."

"What?"

"I said it."

"You'll have to say more."

"You've got me going tonight. I think I will. But it's going to be very personal.

"I went into a Kansas City jewelry store to hang a picture of Terry McGovern for 'The Bowery After Dark.' Saw a good-looking girl shopping there. I'd never seen her before. I asked her if she'd like to go

to the show. Gave her a couple of tickets, and she sees me after the show and gives me back one of them.

"‘You’ve got nerve, sending me to that rotten show,’ she says.

"‘I’ve got more nerve than that,’ says I. ‘What’s the matter with us getting married?’

"‘She takes a handkerchief out of her purse, and I see a lot of bills in her purse.

"‘That’s too much money for a young girl to be carrying around loose,’ says I.

"‘It’s only about four hundred,’ says she.

"‘Well, it’s too much even at that,’ says I. ‘And you ought to have a strong guy looking out for it.’

"‘So I took it to keep for her. Part of it I spent buying her a ring and a camera. I didn’t have a bean; and she always wanted a camera.

"‘How much do you make?’ she says when I gave her the presents.

"‘And I told her—forty a week.

"‘How do you expect to support me on forty a week?’ says she.

"‘I don’t,’ says I. ‘You give me five thousand and I’ll go out in business for myself.’

"‘And she did; and Rose and I got married; and I’ve been married and in business ever since.’"

"‘What do you do on your night off?’"

"‘Go to see a failure—never a success.’"

"‘Why?’"

"‘To find out what makes it a failure. That’s my business as much as going to first nights. Why don’t you ask me why I go to first nights?’"

"‘I suppose you go to see whether the play ‘gets over.’"

"‘No; the newspapers tell me all about that. I go

to get my casts among the unemployed players that always turn out for first nights. I stand in the lobby and watch the actors come in. 'Conway, I want you,' I says the other night. That's the way I signed Tearle. I knew there was somebody I wanted for a certain part, and the minute I see him I knew he was the guy. Got Olive Wyndham the same way. I wanted Florence Moore every time I saw her walking into an opening for five years; but I didn't have the part till 'Parlor, Bedroom and Bath' turned up."

"You say the newspapers can tell you about an opening."

"Sure they can. They do. They're right, mostly. Once in a while they call it wrong on a show the people want; but most of the time the critics are right."

"You take dramatic criticism seriously?"

"Yes; and I'll tell you how seriously. I signed Eileen Huban for three years, with an option on the next two, just on the strength of her notices in 'Grasshopper.' I'd never seen her. I offered Elsie Mackay a contract on nothing but what the Chicago critics said about her looks. I was willing to gamble on her learning how to act. And I signed Marjorie Rambeau on the strength of notices she pulled out of two failures."

"Who's your favorite dramatic critic?"

"The poor guy can't write—but he knows what he likes."

"I know the kind—what's his name?"

"Al Woods."

"How'd you come to build the Woods Theater?"

"By way of putting back into Chicago some of the money the town has given me—and making some more. I knew I needed my own theater here when I had to send 'The Littlest Rebel' to New York—it was

a fortune at the Chicago Opera House—in order to get a house here for ‘Gypsy Love.’ I told Erlanger I wanted to send ‘Gypsy Love’ to Chicago. He said:

“I know a better place—the store house.”

“Well, if I hadn’t had a Chicago success to swap him for a New York failure, I couldn’t have brought ‘Gypsy Love’ here and made something like a hundred thousand out of this and other midwestern territory. I knew then I needed my own Chicago theater.”

“You’ve built a good one.”

“Yes, I think it’s the best production I ever made. But wait till you see the Apollo! . . .

“I’m glad Louie Mann wasn’t here in time for the bomb. He was pretty well scared of his German part in ‘Friendly Enemies.’ . . .

“Funny, about that play. Did I tell you it was written in five days?”

“What took so long?”

“I’ll tell you about that. But first—well, Sam Bernard meets me at the Knickerbocker and tells me Arthur Hopkins is after a play that Sammy Shipman and Aaron Hoffman want to write. Bernard wants me to get it and put him and Mann in it—talk about high explosives! Only, he’s afraid, he says, that some guy will shoot Mann for the German he’ll have to play.

“Now, the funny part of this is that I’ve just that day given this guy Shipman a thousand dollars on a ten-minute scenario of this play—and given it to him just to get rid of him. He’s pestering the life out of me with the big idea.

“Strange, how things sometimes run in bunches. Bernard and I walk down the street and run plump into Mann. And before either of us can say a word Mann says:

“‘If you get the play, Al, I’ll do it—even if they shoot me.’

“‘What’s your salary, Louie?’ says I; and he gives it a figure.

“‘That ain’t right, Louie,’ says I; and he swears himself blue telling me it’s his regular salary.

“‘I’ll give you so much,’ says I, naming it; and he turns from blue to red because I’ve raised him a hundred for taking a chance.”

“Immense!” I told Mr. Woods. “But how about ‘Friendly Enemies’ being written in five days?”

“Oh, I forgot to tell you that this talk was on Tuesday. Well, the next Sunday those guys, Shippy and Hoffman, turn up at my house and show me the completed play.

“But that wasn’t the funniest thing they showed me. They showed me a bill for \$150 for cigars smoked from Tuesday to Saturday. They couldn’t afford to write more than five days.”

Why God Loves the Irish



IN THE Celtic Grill at the Sherman—by all means the Celtic grill!—Miss Maire O'Neill sat between me and her fellow Irish Player, Arthur Sinclair, and one thing and another happened for us besides a very good lunch. It was Carnival Convention at Hotel Sherman and the freaks were all over the place.

There was the Giant. He had to bend to get through the doorway. He was a fair young man with a timid face and unbelievable legs—he didn't seem to believe them himself. The waiter said he was nine feet seven and ate double portions. Miss O'Neill's gorgeous eyes blinked at the sight. "God Almighty, this is awful!—wonderful!—marvelous!" she cried.

"Their legs are always too long," said Mr. Sinclair, in general dispraise of giants.

"He brings back to me the first days of the Abbey Theater," Miss O'Neill sighed pleasantly. "In those Dublin days we had no orchestra, not even a piano, till William Butler Yeats went out and borrowed one—and a terrible thing it was, all cracked and yellow-keyed.

. . . I can see Yeats, wonderful in his flowing butterfly tie, standing in front of the moth-eaten curtains and saying we've just got a piano, but none of us can play it, but if anybody in the audience . . .

"'I will,' says a voice; and a man rises from his seat, foot by foot, yard by yard, as high as this lad

who just came in, and walks down the aisle to the piano.

"'I'd love to play it,' says he, examining it back and front—'where's the handle?'"

"Ah, those were the days!" Miss O'Neill sighed. "Plenty of turmoil and twelve-and-six for salary. That's what I got then, and what he got, too."

"Twenty-five shillings I got," Mr. Sinclair protested.

"Twelve-and-six! Don't be a snob. You may be worth your hundreds of pounds now, but twelve-and-six, Arthur, is what you got and what you earned in those old days near fifteen years ago."

"Twenty-five shillings I got and not a penny less. And have you noticed what pretty eyes she has?" said Mr. Sinclair by way of concluding the argument.

I had. And her vivid gray eyes, like her acting, like many of her half-finished electrical gestures, reminded me of Mrs. Fiske—whom Miss O'Neill has never seen.

"Mrs. Fiske might be your sister," I was going to say, when it occurred to me that Sarah Algood is her sister; so instead I asked her why she had not taken the Algood name for the stage.

"A large brain wave possessed me to use my mother's name and not trade on my sister's reputation. It was ages before a soul knew we were related. People would talk to her from the depths of their heart of Molly O'Neill, and to me of Sally Algood—and these talks we'd exchange every night in the bed."

We were talking of the music that lies in Irish drama Irishly spoken, when Mr. Sinclair was reminded of a day in Southport, England.

"I and three others of the company were put up

there at the house of a 'leading citizen.' A lady met him in the street and asked if he had been to see the Irish Players. 'See them!' he said, 'I've got four of 'em staying with me at the house.'

"'And do they talk the same off the stage?'"

"'Worse,' replied the leading citizen."

"Mister O'Reilly! Mister Playboy!"

Mr. Sinclair looked at the page incredulously. "I'll not believe it," he said, his small and too beautiful hands playing with his checkered cuffs, playing with the many pearl buttons sewed on his green coat sleeve above them. "'Tis the gin. I'll not believe——!"

"Mister O'Reilly!" plainly shouted the page. "Mr. Playboy!"

"Do you hear that, too, Molly?"

"God Almighty! but the strange things do happen here today," admitted Miss O'Neill. "'Mister Playboy!' It's like a ghost of the living. Ah, I wish we were now playing 'The Playboy of the Western World'—even with but twenty persons in the house. It was Literature."

"It was Life," quoth Mr. Sinclair.

"It was Synge," almost with reverence said the not habitually revering Maire O'Neill, whose humor, I think, makes her shy of seriousness.

"I'll never forget the time we were hearing protests against 'The Playboy' at the old Abbey," spoke Mr. Sinclair, "and a man clambered onto the stage to protest against the drunken scene. He reeled and would have fallen but for Yeats catching him. Then out of his pocket there crashed to the stage a bottle of whisky that would be worth much now in this country. The bottle broke, and every drop was lost, and the man thrown out on all fours."

"I've seen more than bottles broken on the stage,"

Miss O'Neill remembered softly—"I've seen eggs and the corpses of animals not recently dead. In Liverpool one night when we were playing Synge's 'The Tinker's Wedding'—in Liverpool, where every night I had to give the man that played the priest a full bottle of brandy to keep his cowardice down—they tore into the masonry—at least into the molding—and threw it at us. And somebody let fly a great pocketknife, which caught one of us flat in the breast, taking the wind all out of him. But everything was not ill luck that night, for when I picked up the knife I found that one of its blades was a corkscrew, which came in handy for my brandy drinker."

"I've seen worse things thrown than that, Molly."

"Have you now?"

"When first we played 'The Playboy' in New York they threw Ingersoll watches."

"What was all the throwing about, anyway?" I wanted to know.

"In Dublin," Mr. Sinclair explained, "they objected to the use of the word shift, and the objection came overseas with 'The Playboy.'"

"I remember," smiled Miss O'Neill, "a letter to Sally from a relative, who said her blood froze and her marrow jelled when she heard on the stage the word shift used for a garment which even in the privacy of her home she never referred to but as a chemise. Here is the line—let me recall it—the Playboy says: 'I wouldn't leave Peggeen, not if you brought me a drift of chosen females standing in their shifts itself.'"

"That's the line," dropped Mr. Sinclair, "that made the Abbey Theater famous."

"That's the play that made the Abbey Theater

famous," Miss O'Neill corrected, "and I wish we were playing it tonight."

"As I do myself," Mr. Sinclair assented. "'The White-Headed Boy' is a good show, it is, but it——"

"But it is not Literature," said Miss O'Neill, with a capital L again.

"I remember," expanded Mr. Sinclair, "when we all got arrested—on account of 'The Playboy' in Philadelphia. We were in the court of a police magistrate of the name of James Carey—I'll never forget him! A witness was trying to repeat a line from the play and getting it all wrong, and we Players all laughed, we roared.

"'Silence!' cried the magistrate. 'Don't you know you're in a court of law? Stop that noise or I'll throw the whole of you into the street'—the whole of us being prisoners at the bar!"

"Stink bombs we've suffered for that play—and enjoyed it," sighed Miss O'Neill.

"Didn't two of the company coming to Chicago to play it make their wills before we opened here?" Mr. Sinclair declared with a rising inflection.

"Did they have anything to leave, Arthur?"

"A fine overcoat one of them had. But we got cheered here, I remember, and the wills were torn up. It was so peaceful we might have been playing 'The White-Headed Boy' at the Olympic."

"Small chance for a riot with that play," Miss O'Neill regretted. "I had hope the other night, when something was flung from the balcony. But it was only a marshmallow. For an instant, though, I thought it was something hard and had a thrill."

"Mr. Rosenstein! Mr. Rosenstein!" cried the page.

"Not at this table," murmured Miss O'Neill.

"Peace and prosperity, a run instead of a reper-

tory, aren't," I retraced, "much like the old fighting days."

"I'd give my soul," vowed Molly O'Neill, "for a bit of disturbance at this prosperous play!"

"There's Sinclair's line about Ireland—that," I suggested, "might get some confetti if you had enough hard-boiled Englishmen out in front."

"Not the way Arthur's substituted 'English government' for 'English people' and 'damned thing' for 'bloody thing.' There's no riot in the line now," she said with a twinkle.

"It's as good a speech as ever it was. Listen to it!" demanded Mr. Sinclair. "The boy says, 'I want to be free!' And 'My God!' I say, 'isn't he like poor old Ireland—asking for freedom? And we're like the English government, offering them every damned thing but the right thing.' I won't say 'bloody'—not on the stage; it's a bloody low word."

"For the love of God, Arthur, can't you make some sacrifice for your country!—He loves that line better than life itself, the man does." With one informing eye Miss O'Neill treated me to a bewitching wink, and lest I miss that, her shoe momentarily trod my shoe. "Tell him, Arthur, what you said the night you were afraid peace had been made for Ireland. Tell him yourself."

"I said, 'Oh, my God, if peace is settled, what'll become of my big line!' But, of course, I said it only in——"

"There are no buts and of courses in it," laughed Molly O'Neill. "For the love of God, Arthur, can't you make some sacrifice for a good story!"

"A hell of a disposition—but do you notice what pretty eyes she has?—Well, you get the dog now, Molly and I'll take you both for a taxi ride."

A Rube Aphrodite



MISS MILDRED WALKER, the young woman who counterfeits the nude statue of *Aphrodite* in Mr. Gest's impassioned production of that name, did not know that she was being "interviewed." It is no fault of hers that she is here exposed with her shoes, stockings, skirt and wrist-watch on; I take all the blame for the inartistic deed.

They have a suppress-agent department in the "Aphrodite" organization which sees to it that in the newspapers Miss Walker is never photographed, paragraphed, biographed. She is the most widely unknown sensation on the stage.

But when in the lobby of the Auditorium I happened casually to be introduced to her and her dressing room mate, Georgiana Decker, who acts *Myrtis* (the smaller of the two little sisters that play about *Chrysis*); when I had walked with Mildred and Georgiana to the corner drug store, and ordered malted milks all round and a whole half-pound of peppermint candy; when I had found out what Mildred really is—why, then I made up my mind to steal an interview.

For I found out that the world's nakedest actress in the most startling theatrical production of the century is—a rube. On my soul and conscience, the supreme revealment in this disrobed drama is just a little rube.

"Mildred," I said, "what would you have said if they'd arrested you on the opening night and taken you before a judge and charged you with appearing before three thousand persons as naked as when you were born?"

"'Jedge,' I'd 'a' said," said Mildred, with her quaint small-town accent and her rube telescoping of the words, "'t ain't so!—I gotta piece of court-plaster on!" And what I said would 'a' been true any night—or *matinee*." (Set the double "e" in italics, Mr. Printer, and it will sound just as Mildred said it.)

"I'll b' glad when 't gets real Winter 'gain," Mildred was telling Georgiana and me. "I git homesick for home in Summertime." Her suit bespoke a Fifth avenue tailor, and her velour hat may have seen Paris recently, and her pretty little face (with its slim lips and perfect nose and eager blue eyes, all lit by reddish, curlish hair) was the face of the city dweller. But her short-cut speech was purest rube, and I wouldn't citify it for a load of clover.

"Where's 'home'?" said I.

"West Winfield, N. Y.," Mildred said, pronouncing the initials. "There's a store 'n' coupla churches 'n' popcorn stand 'n' saloon—but it's ice-cream parlor now—'n' our next-door neighbor, th' widow-woman, Mis' Nichols.

"Y'oughta hear her when I went home with the *Aphrodite* poster. She looks at it and tightens her mouth 'n' she says:

"'Guess y'u didn't have many clothes on when thet was took!"

"'None 't all, Mis' Nichols.'

"'H'm! How d'y'u think I'd look standing up there like thet?" "

"They think it's terrible for Mildred to be an actress," cooed little Georgiana, who is all city child.

"Thought 't was wuss to be an artists' model," Mildred enlarged. "I was making some dolls' clothes for a kid. She came down t' the gate one day 'n' just stood there, with her finger in her mouth; wouldn't come into the yard. When I asked her what's the matter, she says:

" 'My maw says I mustn't come any more 'cause you're one of them artists' models.' "

"What do you call folks who talk and think like that, Mildred?" I asked Mildred.

"Rubes," said Mildred. "There's nothin' but rubes in West Winfield. That's why I'm homesick for 't. I'm a rube myself. But I know it—and they don't. You couldn't make Hennery Pickerskill believe he's a rube."

"Who's Henry?" asked Georgiana. "I never heard of that one."

"Hennery," said Mildred, gently correcting the pronunciation of her companion, "is my swain. He's got a brown derby 'n' thinks he's a sport. He's got a cigar, too, by Susan!—which he never lights. But y'oughta see him tuck it in his smile every time he passes our house. . . . And then there's Hennery's uncle, Joshua Pickerskill. Oh, he'd kill you dead!" Mildred laughed. "Old Josh Pickerskill would."

So I risked my life and heard about Hennery's uncle.

"Old Josh Pickerskill married a young wife," Mildred said, and shook her head bodefully. "And folks jest set 'round 'n' waited. Didn't have t'wait ver' long, nuther.

"Old Josh comes into the store, nervous-like, one

day. He gets him a bite of Star eating-tobacco offen Lut Jennings, and chews round without a word till finally nobody could stand it any longer and Jedge Pennoyer up and says:

“‘Land o’ prunes, Josh, what you got on your mind?’

“‘Shock,’ says Josh, very quiet. ‘I happened home ’n hour earlier ’n usual today, and as I walks through the settin’-room I see young Doc Snodgrass kissin’ my wife.’

“‘What the town’d waited for had come. Everybody in the store was silent for a minute.’ And for a minute Mildred was silent, too.

“‘Then Jedge Pennoyer he says to Hennery’s uncle, ‘Josh,’ he says terribly anxious, ‘what did yo’ do?’

“‘I grabbed up the pail,’ says old Josh, ‘and went out and fed the calf—and I guess by the way I slammed the door they see I don’t like it very well.’

“‘Coupla days later the Jedge asks him what he’s done ’bout young Doc Snodgrass.

“‘Ain’t had time t’ do nothin’ yet,’ says Josh, ‘but, by Hek, before Saturday I’m going to make him give me a sack of flour!’

“‘Do you wonder I git homesick for home?’ said Mildred, with her third helping of peppermint.

And—perhaps because we were in a drug store—the talk somehow drifted to the mixture with which every night, before appearing as the statue, Mildred coats her gleaming body. Informally I was told that the fluid is composed of oxide of zinc, witch-hazel, bay-rum, rose-water and glycerin.

“‘You try it first on your arm, to see it’s the right thinness,’ said Mildred to me—to me! “And you must be keerful not to sit down after ’t dries—it’ll crack on you.”

I could see myself plated with *Aphrodite* mixture, and I had to laugh. I had been holding in, and now a hundred held laughs burst from me.

"I know what you're laughin' at—it's the rube way I talk," said Mildred, without sorrow, without anger, resignedly. "I've tried to talk like people, but somehow I jes' can't."

"She talks just the way she did the day she came into the studios in New York and we all called her 'Taters'; but I wouldn't have her change it for anything in the world," declared the doting Georgiana, whose sentiments were my own. "She was the loveliest model for the nude those artists had ever seen. No wonder Mr. Gest stopped looking—he'd looked at hundreds—when he saw Mildred.—Oh, Mildred, do you ever hear any more of Madame Hermes' suit against you?"

"No," said Mildred, "and I'm still infringing."

"What are you infringing?" the curse of curiosity impelled me to ask.

"Oh, it's a long story," Mildred sighed, "but I'll try to shorten it. This Madame Hermes was a 'livin' picture' producer. Mr. Gest engaged her to put the mixture on me. When we closed in New York for the summer she wanted me to go to work for her at Coney Island—wanted me to exhibit myself as the 'Original Statue of Aphrodite' somewhere between Hazel Hepner, the bearded lady, and Zip, the wild man. And I said no; and she said then she wouldn't make me up next season. I said I'd put the stuff on myself. Then Madame Hermes got red in the eye and she cried:

"'See that that stuff is all you do put on. For that court-plaster is my patent, and if I catch you using it I'll sue you for infringement.'"

"Do you think she really *has* got a patent on it?"

Georgiana asked. I couldn't have asked if my life depended.

"I don't calcalate she has," said Mildred gravely. "Folks say you gotta send a photo of your invention to Washington—and—well—I'd like to see her get me in that picture!"

The Gravest Fault of Sir Herbert Tree



ACTING," said Herbert Beerbohm Tree, who had just completed a distinguished pattern of it with the rôle of *Cardinal Wolsey* in "Henry VIII" at the Illinois Theater, "is a matter of hypnotism." He qualified with the lighter touch that is characteristic of the man who talks as wittily as he writes:

"No matter what the faults of the actor, no matter how enormous, he can with hypnotism induce at least a part of his audience to believe that he is what the *dramatis personae* proclaims him."

England's wittiest actor laughed at his way of putting it. Finding him in this mood, I pressed the subject and asked him to tell me what he regarded as his gravest defects as an actor. But his answer was deferred; Sir Herbert has a delicious sense of the dramatic, and who knows but he deliberately saved it for the "tag" of our dressing-room drama?

He told me rapidly, in spare words and with much more of gesture than he permits himself on the stage, that he could measure the quality of an actor by his handshake. In the air he moved a hand flabbily and heavily. The actor with that handshake was a fish. But the one whose grip was light and nervously alive! He was—Sir Herbert touched his brow—an intelligence, a somebody, an actor. He said actor with a fine

pride in the word, the pride of a craftsman and artist.

Some actors, I dare say, are proud to be knights; Tree is a knight who is proud to be an actor. He has no use for the one that would be a gentleman first and an actor second. He has an artist's horror of the genteel, and told me that the best advice he ever had given to a young player was: "For heaven's sake, don't be genteel; be natural and keep your vowels open."

He did not tell me what he thought of the tribal dialects of the great Middle West that acclaims him, but he was emphatic in his disesteem of what he termed the cockneyisms of his own country, which now, it seems, have traversed from the V'd W's of Dickens to what Sir Herbert calls "squeezed vowels."

"These," he said, "are infinitely worse than the vigorous vulgarity of the Victorian"; and asked me how I liked his v-ful alliteration, which you may be sure I liked almost as well as I liked his boyish way of liking it himself.

A big man's boyishness is doubly striking; and Tree is very big at close range, with his high Du Maurier figure, still young eyes, deep-set in a face that is Britishly mastiff rather than Britishly bulldog.

Suddenly the talk went to war and presently he was relating an experience in Germany when he acted before and talked king-to-king with the Emperor.

"I had the honor of playing before the German Emperor in 'Richard II,' a play and a part I love. And I played direct to him in his box as I came to the speech:

*"For God's sake, let us sit upon the ground
And tell sad stories of the death of kings—"*

Tree read it swiftly, giving point and emphasis only when he came to

*Keeps death his court and there the antic sits,
Scoffing his state, grinning at his pomp—*

"I had thrown myself to the ground, my chin in my hand, my eyes straight on the Emperor's. There was intoxication in the situation, and I felt it in my veins. . . . Well, when I was summoned to the royal box the Emperor spoke, complimented, you know. We could at least agree in all modesty that Shakespeare was a great dramatist.

"Great because he is dramatic," said the Emperor.

"All great events in history are great because they are dramatic," I answered him; and, in the thrill of the moment, aided perhaps by the consciousness that my costume of *King Richard* was more royal than his of the German Emperor and that we two were for the moment staged as king and king, I added: "And, if I may say so, what I've said of "events in history" is applicable to individuals."

Sir Herbert reconstructed the scene thrillingly. I not only heard, I saw, a prince of play-actors bestowing upon a prince of the purple a princely compliment.

"For that instant," he said, "we were equals."

He did not say: "For that instant, the German Emperor and Sir Herbert Tree were two accomplished actors giving a great performance." He did not have to say it.

He never says it all. He told me: "An Englishman talks better than he speaks, and an American speaks better than he talks"—from which, together with his amused smile, it was to be gathered that our

dinner-table anecdotage is sometimes less to his liking than the creative conversation of a London dinner in which the anecdote of a tomorrow is born.

He told me of the manner in which Sir Edward Grey informed England that she was not bound to go to war, but that "there is honor, gentlemen, the honor of the country." It was told in the hem-y and haw-y manner of the English country gentleman; but something in the air vibrated.

Then Sir Herbert struck the table four times slowly. Big Ben had boomed that many times just one minute too late—sixty seconds after Sir Edward had ceased.

"If you had been making that speech," Tree said he had said to a famous London stage director, "you would have waited for Big Ben to strike."

Then he turned on himself. He imitated the Scotsman who praised every player but one in Tree's production of "Twelfth Night." As name after name rolled off the burr, Tree had listened in vain for his own.

And finally, at parting, the Scot had said: "I've forgotten something important"; and Tree beamed on him, sure that his compliment was come at last. "Vurra important," said the Scot. "I was reading an article of yours in the Fortnightly the other day. It was wonderful. You must have meestaken your vocation."

And there was the lady with: "Oh, I went to see you as *Herod* ten years ago. It was remarkable. I never went to see you again."

"You tell them well on you," I laughed.

"It's one of my favorite egotisms," he laughed back.

"Speaking of the faults of an actor that may or

may not be ameliorated by the uses of hypnotism," I said, going back to the front for the finish, "what should you say are your own gravest faults as an——?"

Sir Herbert, interrupting perfectly, spoke as one emerging from profound meditation:

"I am trying to disentangle them from my virtues." Then the most widely dispraised of highly-placed actors flashed on me:

"My gravest fault is a too-great deference to dramatic criticism."

The Double Life of Ina Claire



HERE was a tap on our living-room door, followed by the warning voice of mother:

"It's Ina Claire; wipe the egg off your chin!"

I had failed to find Miss Claire at the Ambassador, so she found me at the Virginia.

"I've come," she said, "to have my interview taken"—and handed me her Malacca walking stick, unsilvered, while she permitted me to aid her out of her long outsloping leopard coat.

"This is friendly of you," I said, buttoning the top button of my waistcoat and restoring the stick.

"I know that a little kindness goes a long way with a drama critic, having one in my own family," not unproudly (I thought) said she, who is known on the marriage register at Wheaton, Ill., as Mrs. James Whittaker.

"How is the delightful dog?" said I.

"Jimmie," she imparted, "is swollen with health and a new fur coat he purchased in Paris; he looks like a doubtful banker. I suppose you know that the Shuberts have barred him from all their New York theaters for saying in the *New York Daily News* that one of them—I forget which one—was a mausoleum?"

"Yes, I know. Now he can count on a couple of free nights every week."

"I wonder," she speculated, "what a barred critic does with his free nights—when his wife is out of town?"

"Well," I answered, "there's Charles Collins of the *Chicago Evening Post*; he's been disbarred from certain local theaters for several years now. So every night there's an opening at the Garrick or the Studebaker or the Princess he sits him down and writes a short story and sells it to the *Saturday Evening Post*, or *Harper's Bazaar*, or the *Red Book* for a thousand dollars."

"My God," she thrilled, "if it's that profitable, I hope they never let Jimmie in!"

She was pretty as a pomegranate, with her fair hair waved up and back, her hazel eyes frolicking under her broad brow, her thirty-six perfect cream teeth dancing behind her broad, plastic mouth; she was live as the unclouded morning. And when we had talked about good Arthur Byron and about wicked "Bluebeard's Eighth Wife"—in which they share the stellar distinction at the Shubert-Garrick, where the bar on Whittakers does not include Jimmie's wife—we talked about the ideal comedy for Ina.

"It could be written," I told her, "on your own secret honeymoon here in Chicago. What a comedy of love and lies and youth and—naughty appearances!"

"We had to lie," she comically protested. "I simply couldn't be domestic—then. It would have been too publicly terrible. Fancy domesticity and 'The Gold Diggers'! I came on here for my vacation vowing I wouldn't marry Jimmie. He told me that he had made all the arrangements, that he had gone out on the North Side and selected the city's most respectable apartment in a little by-street as innocent as Pomander Walk. 'But,' I said, 'I haven't come to marry you this time, Jimmie; perhaps some other time, but not now.' At which he shoved me into a hired auto-

mobile and told the man to drive to Wheaton. And there we were united in holy bonds, with the chauffeur and a stranger in blue overalls as the only witnesses.

"It was a jazz marriage," she sighed pleasantly. "When we got to the apartment there were eight full milk bottles on the back porch—Jimmie hadn't been 'home' for a week—and dust all over the place as thick as plush. And I had always pictured myself getting married with all my friends enviously looking on as I walked up the aisle in white satin and pearls!

"That apartment, believe me, was no place for white satin. Everything was dusty; and everything we touched broke—plates broke, chairs broke, even the bed broke. And the neighbors were scandalized.

"It was the tragedy of our comical honeymoon," she amusedly wailed, "that the only people we wanted to believe us married—our nice, quiet, middle-class neighbors of this most respectable Pomander Walk—wouldn't, couldn't believe that we were married. They sneaked up the back stairs and read the lettering on my trunks—not 'Mrs. J. Whittaker,' but 'Miss I. Claire.' And they saw my underthings hanging on the line and knew that nothing so gay could belong to a decent married woman."

"Didn't you," I broke in, "lose a maid because she wouldn't work for a lady who wore such lascivious lingerie?"

"We lost one maid that way. But usually we lost the lingerie, too. The colored maids would run South with it and never come back. We were habitually maidless—and the dishes piled neck high. One day—it was the third day—I got hungry and had to wash a dish. I am not," Ina didn't have to tell me, "what is called a good housekeeper. But, just the same, when Jimmie said his mother was coming to

pay her first call on me, I tied up my head and got a duster and a mop and a bottle of furniture polish and cleaned house. 'Well,' said Jimmie to his mother, proudly, 'what do you think of her?'

" 'She's all right if you like her,' said Mrs. Whitaker, taking me in at her leisure. 'You make up well,' she said—on this one day when I'd taken off layer after layer!

" 'So I've been told,' I answered weakly. And when that was over I went downtown and told the friends who met me that I was just spending a little vacation in Chicago and living with friends—but before that vacation was over most of them believed my plural was an exaggeration.

" 'I don't think,' said Ina, swinging her Malacca, "a taxicab ever came into that little street till Jimmie and I moved in. The neighbors always were peeping at their windows. I'd try to get out in a rush, but Jimmie, darn him! unfailingly would forget something he had to go back after, or stop on the front steps to hitch his garter. He was an adorable bridegroom, but a bum conspirator; his socks were forever slipping."

" 'But he lied like a gentleman and a journalist,' I defended, "and the world never knew you were married to him till he got ready to tell."

" 'Yes,' Ina assented, "he lied well and often, and so did I. Anything, I told him, at that time but the admission of our wedded state. 'It's better for my job,' I said to Jimmie, 'for me to be thought weak and wicked than moral and married.' And apart from our romance, which heaven knows was wonderful despite the comic trimmings, there was an experiment to be made. I wanted to find out whether it is an actress' marriage itself or the public's consciousness of that

marriage which makes the supposed difference to her so-called following. I wanted to find out whether marriage, like murder, will out in an actress' work. And I learned. Nobody knows till you tell 'em, and then it makes no difference. It's all superstition!" And she whirled her walking stick.

"Then you would advise young ladies of your profession to marry early?"

"Early as they please; but I shouldn't advise them to marry drama critics."

"You mean it's cruel to the critic?"

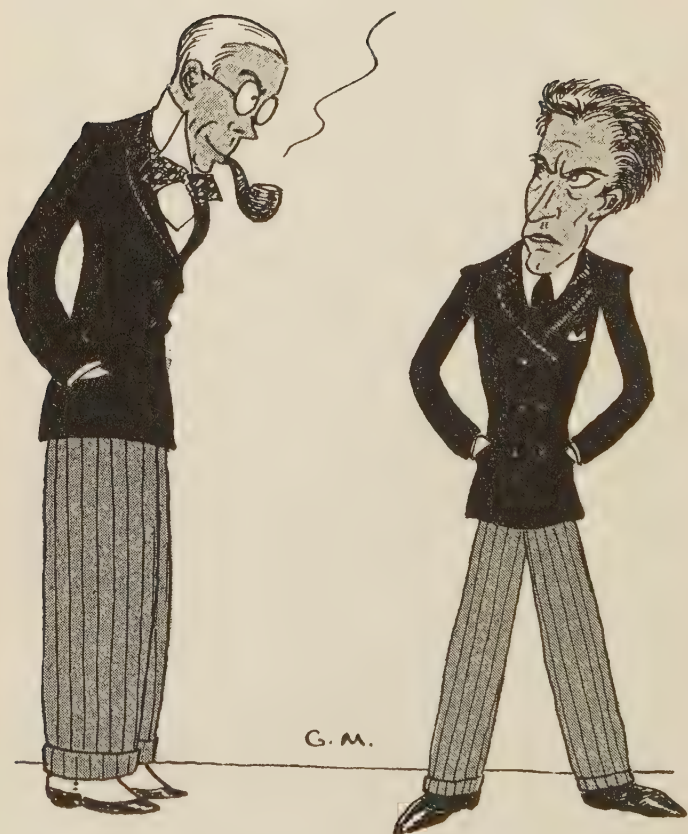
"Nothing of the kind! It's cruel to the actress; her husband can't praise her in the public prints, and the other critics are apt to write lukewarmly of one who has married into their tribe. And not being in a position to praise her, an actress' critic-husband is apt to go the other way—as Jimmie did when, after we'd been married more than a year, he one day dramatically spilled the beans by writing for his paper: 'When she married me Ina Claire told me she was an actress, but there is nothing in "The Gold Diggers" to prove she told the truth.' I don't think any critic ought to establish his reputation for justness at the expense of his wife."

"You didn't foresee that situation?"

"Of course I didn't. Jimmie wasn't a drama critic when I married him; he was only an honest newspaper man."

"Oh!"

"Still"—she weighed it, smiling dearly—"the situation has its advantages. Jimmie is never called Mr. Claire in my presence—nor am I called Mrs. Whittaker in his. We are the most publicly unmarried married couple that I know. We've got two names, two professions, two salaries—but, thank God, only one home!"



Jack and John Barrymore



4P-TAP-TAP-TAP! on the Barrymore door at the Congress Hotel.

No answer.

Bang! Bang-bang!

"Come in! Why don't you come in?"

His back is to the door, which I close behind me. He is bent over a desk, laboriously writing with a short pencil on a yellow telegraph form. He speaks without looking up or turning:

"Please open one bottle now—and see that the others are kept cool."

Have I unwittingly trapped the drama's most illustrious young water-wagoner in the act of "falling off" at one a. m.?

"I'll take the same," I say, risking it.

"I beg your pardon, old man," he says, half-rising, half-turning, and giving me the hand that does not hold the pencil—"I thought you were the Bevo."

And as solemnly as may be, two fairly sane men recite in unison the silly College (Inn) cry that was composed by Lou Houseman on the occasion of Jack Barrymore becoming John:

*"Be-vo,
Erst-while
Barley-corn,
Barry-more."*

"I'm trying to answer this," says Barry, and hands me a two-hundred-word telegram from E. H. Sothern and Winthrop Ames.

They are just back from France with a message from Pershing calling on all good American actors to come over there and combat homesickness with entertainment. It is a chatty telegram, but imperative.

Barry has gone this far with his answer:

"As I have failed to pass for active service with the medical board, I'm delighted with the opportunity to help a little in any capacity. It's a great chance for those of us who can't be on the regular job, much as we might want to."

He adds: "Thanks very much," and signs.

"It's a wonder," says I, "the newspapers didn't have a story of the medical examiners turning you down."

"Not likely. I gave my own name—Blythe. I was born, like my father, Blythe; and, if I die respectable, I hope to be buried Blythe."

Tap-tap! and this time it is Mr. Bevo himself—four of him crowding the ice in a champagne cooler.

Barry sips his beerless beer and talks the night away. Why not? It is Saturday night. He has lived all week only for those eight poignant performances of *Peter Ibbetson* that are the talk of as much of the town as knows great acting when faced by it. Why not?

Once, maybe—but no longer is there any danger of the younger Barry inheriting the obituary written to his living father by the jestful, doting Wilton Lackaye:

*He talked beneath the stars,
He slept beneath the sun;
He lived a life of going-to-do
And died with nothing done.*

Let the Bevo burble! Let Barry talk!

"Why couldn't you go soldiering?"

He shows me a leg that is as fascinating as the sore toe in "Tom Sawyer."

"I can't think of anything more honorable than a varicose leg," I tell him.

"Don't!" he begs. "I got it standing with one foot on the rail."

This sounds like Jack Barrymore, like the old-time Jack of the after-night, like Jack of the rascal hours. And therefore does not last. He goes on:

"Some Winter's night in the years to come, when children sit on my lap and say, 'Granddad, just what did you do in France to lick the Kaiser?' I'll throw out what's left of my chest and say, 'I put grease-paint on my nose and made faces.' Bah!"

I read to him from the Sothern-Ames telegram: "Our soldiers in France vitally need entertainment from home to combat homesickness and keep them fit. This need is emphasized by every important officer."

"But acting isn't important—acting isn't important anywhere," he derides.

"Your acting of *Peter Ibbetson* at the Princess is most important," I say; "it brings back one's ancient faith in the playhouse."

"That's very nice and kind of you, old man, and I appreciate it. But what I mean is this: If there were no such thing as acting—if it were all wiped out—it wouldn't make a particle of difference to the sort of people who really matter. Wait a minute. Listen!

"The people who matter are the people with enough imagination to read a play for themselves and see it acted in their imagination much better than any group of mimes could hope to act it. Listen!

"I've been an actor now for sixteen years. In that time I've given two good performances—just two: this one and the one in 'Justice.' And those two performances—the sum of sixteen years' training and more or less work and ambition—don't hold a candle to what you or I could imagine them to be just by sitting down and reading the plays and letting our imaginations run. Listen!

"In all the theatergoing that I've done in sixteen years and more, I've seen just two performances that were better than you or I could stage in the theater of our imagination, with no physical props but the play-books. One of these performances was the Russian ballet, 'Petroucha,' and the other was 'Sumurun.' Wait!

"The acting of a good play is as useless and as gratuitous as the illustrating of a good novel. Yes, yes, I know you are going to hold up Du Maurier. But he happened to be a great novelist who could draw; just as Thackeray happened to be one who couldn't. Listen!

"An actor's performance, at best, is the way he happens to feel about a certain character. And why should the way an actor feels be important to persons capable of doing their own feeling? Why, the only really great performance I ever gave in my life was when I was stewed stiff and scared stiffer."

No longer does he have to cry "Listen!"

"A friend of my grandmother's," he takes up with a slow smile, "gave me a set of lapis lazuli links and studs. They were lovely, but I was very broke and

yearned to spend them. So I converted them into money, and left New York for Atlantic City, and lived for a few brief hours like a prince.

"I had reached the end of my tiny roll. I had no return ticket. I wondered if my shoes would last to Philadelphia. I went into a cafe and ordered a dish of soup as pink as the wig of *Peter Ibbetson*. I can see that soup now, and smell it; I think it was shrimp.

"Well, I was dallying with this plate of pink soup and meditating on the drawbacks of a life of crime, when Mort Singer came into the place and sat down across the table from me. He asked me how I would like to go into a musical comedy.

"I said yes. I would have said yes to Barnum and Bailey. I was critically broke. The last of the lapis lazuli was represented by a bowl of shrimp-pink soup.

"'How much would you ask to come to Chicago and play in a musical comedy?' says Mr. Singer.

"I got as far as the sibilant sound of the 's' that starts the 'seventy' in 'seventy-five dollars'——

"'S-s-s——,' says I, and Mort Singer cuts in with:

"'Would four hundred a week do—for a start?'

"And the way in which I said it would do, and at the same time contrived not to fall into the pink soup, was the most magnificent piece of acting of which I have ever been guilty. He didn't know it, but that was the best acting I was ever going to do for Mort Singer."

"So that's how you came to the Princess Theater and 'A Stubborn Cinderella'?"

"Yes, that's how."

"And how does it feel to be back on the same stage, playing *Peter* and poetry and——?"

"I'd never thought of it being the same stage,"

he says with a startled grin. "I really hadn't. I don't seem to be the same fellow. Perhaps I'm not. It's very much like a dream—or a part you've once played—or something like that."

"Who are you when you're playing a big part?—playing *Peter*, say?"

"Oh, I suppose I'm a bit of *Peter Ibbetson* and a bit of Jack Barrymore. At least, I never utterly forget Jack Barrymore—or things he's thought or done—or had done to him. It's a curious mental state. I never can understand the actors who say they lose themselves completely in a part. I don't know what they are talking about. Yet——"

"Yet what?"

"Yet there's a double identity that's very real—to me—and, somehow, never quite the same. I mean the details are not always the same. I'll try to explain:

"I leave my dressing room to make *Peter's* first entrance. I am Jack Barrymore—Jack Barrymore smoking a cigaret. But before I make the entrance I have thrown away the cigaret and become more *Ibbetson* than Barrymore. By the time I'm visible to the audience I am *Ibbetson*, quite.

"That is, you see—I hope to make this clear—on my way to the entrance I have passed imaginary flunkies and given up my hat and coat. *Peter* would have had a hat and coat—naturally; and would have given them up. And he's a timid fellow. He gives up his imaginary hat and coat to these imaginary flunkies just as I, Jack Barrymore—and very timid then—once gave up my hat and coat to flunkies at a great ball given by Mrs. Astor."

"Do you always——?"

"No," he interrupts. "Of course I don't always make *Peter's* entrance with the memory of a bashful

boy at Mrs. Astor's ball. That would harden the memory—make it useless. You couldn't keep on conjuring up the same thing. You have to have different things to get the same emotion. All this sounds horribly queer, doesn't it?"

"Yes; but horribly believable, too. What do you think of—sometimes—when you are choking *Colonel Ibbetson*, preparatory to beaning him with the stick?"

"At times I think of my own mother—putting me to bed—how sweet she was. Then I can put a lot of gusto into choking the old rascal.

"One time—when my brother Lionel played him—I had him get some horrible, some cheap and nasty, perfume. A whiff of that and I could feel a fine frenzy. Not that I ever actually whiffed it. But the idea of this old stinker smelling like what he really was—you understand—or maybe you don't at all—I'm afraid I'm a bum psychologist."

"It's as plain as *Peter* feeling he can whistle one of the smells of old Paris."

"Yes—just."

"But," he goes on, "you don't need Gorgonzola to make you act when you're acting with Lionel. Playing with him is like riding a bicycle behind a Rolls Royce—you make better time. One reason why I want to play more with him is that—well, hang it! you've got to be good to play with Lionel."

"What's your next piece?"

"I'm not quite certain yet. My favorite mascot manager has just offered me a play of three acts and a prologue and—this will make you laugh!—two parts. But I'm afraid it's too wonderful. Only two have been born who could fill that cast—Lieutenant Prince, the ventriloquist, and Jesus Christ."

The Duncan Sisters and Royalty



THE world's greatest Sister Act is lunching with me—and now I *am* glad it's at the Drake. Even if I have to subsist the next six days on hash and sinkers, this palatial place is the only place today for the Duncan darlings. They are fresh from London (not too fresh) and the King of Spain and the Prince of Wales.

Of course I knew them when—but they don't look it. Rosetta, with her Bond street walking stick and Mayfair turban and a dash of hunting pink in her waistcoat, and Vivien, a tailored trance by Redfern, are just too smart for anything less than royalty. But I'm not downcast; I'm glad the old spring suit has been recently asphyxiated; and I'm glad the little blonde Duncan Sisters still treat me as a friend and brother.

Royalty is served with the fish—with, to be meticulous, the trout. But first, of course, comes melon—honeydew tortured with lemon; and with the melon the stage is, in a manner of speaking, set. Which is to say that during melon we get away from Chicago's Colonial Theater and their great hit there with Fred Stone in "Tip-Top," and over to dear old London, where a couple of months back they landed for a vacation, and instead of getting it were seized by Mr. De Courville, the Mr. Dillingham and Mr. Ziegfeld too of the United Kingdom, and on two days' notice interjected into Mr. De

Courville's "Pins and Needles" revue, where their success was instant and enormous.

That's a story too; but so much of that sort of thing and so few kings and sons of kings come to me in my narrow life, that I fain would pass it by in favor of the fish—which is to say of royalty.

They've finished now the story of their electrical engagement at the London Gaiety—we've gone right down to the yellow jacket of the perfect melon. Theater; there's been nothing but theater when the headwaiter himself bears us the silver dish whereon lie six game fishes done to a noble, if not indeed a royal, bronze.

"A dish fit for a king!" says Rosetta—who is the comic one, we'll now remember; who is the one that in "Tip-Top" bumps the base of her spine to achieve a skinned knee. Rosetta's appraisal of the fish explodes the pent Vivien and then herself.

"King!" says Vivien with the grand rising inflection—"we met the King of Spain!"

"And," caps Rosetta (you should have heard her enrichment of that simple word), "the Prince of Wales!"

"Both well, I hope," I try to say—but it chokes and I am speechless while Rosetta runs on:

"Why, we danced with the Prince every night—and how he can dance! Everywhere he'd be asked out he'd say to his hostess, or get the word there, 'You must have the Duncan Sisters!'"

"But we must," cries Vivien, "tell Mr. Stevens how we met the King of Spain!" And Rosetta tries to:

"Mrs. Cornelius Vanderbilt called up from her London house that she was giving a reception to the King of Spain and that we must come—and—and meet the Prince of Wales. You see——"

"You see Mrs. Vanderbilt didn't know," Vivien relays, "that we'd met the Prince the night before, and that that was why she was now asking us."

"It amounted to a royal command, our invitation did," Rosetta takes up; "only of course you can't 'command' American girls; it isn't done. But when the Prince of Wales lets any hostess know there's anybody he'd like especially to see, it's a cinch that person will be asked to the party. You see how it was?"

"Perfectly."

"Only Mrs. Vanderbilt didn't know that we'd met the Prince the night before at Major Fitzgerald's," Vivien laughed.

"You really should have been there at the Major's," Rosetta sweetly says to me. "You should have seen the Prince sitting on the floor while we sang our songs at the piano. He always sits on the floor when we sing."

"He played the drums with the jazz band before the night was over," Vivien sighs. Her sister goes her one better:

"And he sang with us—sat on the floor and harmonized. He's a—he's a regular prince, that prince is."

"How'd he sing?"

"So well I told him he could join our act," says Rosetta.

"What did he say to that?"

"Asked how much we'd give him. When I said two hundred pounds the Prince said, 'Oh, that's more than I ever got!' Then he said, 'I say, Miss Rosetta, what was that third song you and your sister sang?' And when I told him it was 'Feather Your Nest,' he shook his handsome head and fingered his tie—he's always fingering his collar and tie—and said:

"'No, no, that's one of *our* old songs; that's 'Me

and My Gal'—I've known that song two years; you can't fool me!"

"And he was right; it's a swipe," nods Vivien. "The Prince is wise."

"*Wise?*—he's just like an actor. And he knows it!" glees Rosetta. "The Prince said to me, and these are his very words:

"'My life's a vaudeville show; I'm booked up for every day in the week.' And then he said:

"'They prined me so much in Americah that I wanted to bark.'"

"He's a Prince Charming," Vivien murmurs. "His favorite phrase is 'That's so sweet of you.' And he's witty. He ran to the band as we left the Major's and asked the band boys to play 'Me and My Gal.' And the Prince himself played the drums, exultingly, as much as to say, 'There's our tune from which you swiped your tune!' That's the way he drummed us out."

"And next night we met him all over again," thrills Rosetta. "You should have seen that scene of Mrs. Vanderbilt's reception to King Alfonso—diamonds even in the buckle straps of their shoes—every man loaded with decorations except, of course, the American polo players. The Duncan Sisters' family gems didn't go very far in that gathering."

"I don't think you needed any diamonds—with the Prince running to meet you as he did," Vivien puts in sisterly.

"As Mrs. Vanderbilt stepped to greet us we saw the Prince above, on a landing. You should have seen her amazement," says Rosetta wickedly, "when he rushed off the landing like a shot and came up to us

and said, 'I'm so glad to see you're heah—so glad!'—and grabbed me and danced right off."

"Does he talk while he dances?"

"I should say! The first thing he said to me was, 'Well, Miss Rosetta, I think I'll accept that position you offered me.'"

"And you must tell Mr. Stevens," Vivien warns, "what that man—what that strange man"—she is deeply mysterious—"said to you after you'd danced with the Prince."

"I was sitting there," Rosetta obeys, "when a dark distinguished foreign-looking man leaned over me and said:

" 'I hear you make a hit at the Gaiety. I'm sorry I can't see you, but I leave tomorrow.'

" 'Oh, I know who you are,' I said, 'you're the King of Spain.'

" 'You know me?' And he seemed delighted. 'I want to meet your sister,' he said."

"Yes," Vivien lamented, "and the Duke of Manchester had told me in a whisper that I must be sure and make a little bob, which is a curtsy, when I was presented to the King. But I was so scared when he said, 'Miss Duncan, I want to present you to the King of Spain,' that I said, 'How'd do, King?' and forgot to make a bob. Five minutes later I remembered it and was bobbing all over the place."

"Did you sing—this night?"

"At the request of the Prince," says Rosetta. "And what do you think he asked for? 'Feather Your Nest.' And right there, as everywhere else, he sat on the floor by the piano while we harmonized. He's the sweetest boy over there. And shimmy!—you ought to

see the Prince of Wales shimmy. Vivien taught him how to do the Chicago—you know that one.”

“I’d taught it to one of his friends”—and Vivien names a nobleman whose title escapes me. “So the Prince asked me, fixing his tie—he’s always fixing his tie, he wears down three collars at every dance—‘Won’t you teach me to do the Chicago?’ and of course I did. . . . I was awfully sorry he couldn’t go with us for ham and eggs.”

“He said he’d used up all his collars,” Vivien laughs. “You see, Lord Delmaney, the polo player, had said, ‘You must all come up to my place and have ham and eggs!’—at three in the morning. And the King of Spain and several of us went; and everybody but the King cooked or helped—he just supervised. He said to me so drolly:

“‘Little would your American friends believe that at three o’clock in the morning you are eating ham and eggs with a King. The Americans,’ he laughed, ‘think that royalty is stiff. They don’t know us. We like a good time. We’re human.’”

“Human? I should say!” says Rosetta. “At four o’clock that morning the King of Spain was out on the street with the rest of us, hunting for a taxi. When he said good-by to the Duke, ‘Manchester, when you come to Madrid you must look me up,’ he said. And then I said, in the hoarse baby voice I use in our act:

“‘Well, King, when you come to America, just look me up’—and they loved it.”

“He got into the common taxi with us, the King did,” says Vivien.

“Yes,” says funny Rosetta, “and little did that driver dream he was driving a couple of Duncan Sisters and a King!”

Mr. Craven's Lighted First Night



RANK CRAVEN puffed at his pipe, and I puffed at mine. There was a thick but not uncomfortable silence in his chamber at the Drake, for Mr. Craven and I are old friends. We were old friends years before he wrote "The First Year" and got himself acclaimed an American Dramatist; in fact, I knew Frank Craven when he was only a playwright.

"What're we going to talk about?" said he.

"Why not have an actorview about writing plays?" said I.

"I recently gave a lecture on that subject in Cleveland—'On Writing Plays,' my lecture was called," said Mr. Craven, without any great pride in his voice. "It was," he added a trifle gloomily, "a total loss. In fact, it cost me sixteen dollars."

"Did you hire a band?"

"No, I was under no expense at the theater, beyond getting my suit pressed. The lecture was given under the auspices of a Cleveland newspaper that was running a playwriting contest. I spent the sixteen on books—on books on playwriting. I wanted to be right. I sat up all night reading the books. And the more I read the more discouraged I got. I found I'd been writing plays all wrong. I found I didn't know the first real principle of playwriting."

"What did you tell your lecture audience?"

"What could I tell 'em but the truth? There was

no other way. I told 'em I'd found my own ideas to be all wrong according to all the books, and I told 'em I couldn't remember what I'd read in the books—I'm not so quick on the memory as I used to be when I was a young fellow in stock. I told 'em the truth—that is, part of it."

"Which part did you leave out?"

"I left out the real thing. They didn't want the real thing. I left out the very important but unromantic financial part. I talked only of my Art. I didn't tell 'em how my greatest problem in writing 'The First Year' had been to keep the darned thing in two sets of scenery. Scenery costs money, and a playwright in speaking of his Art is not supposed to think of money."

"How'd the lecture go, Frank?"

"It might have been worse—very little—and it might have been better—very much. You see, there was a woman in the first row taking notes. And every time her pencil'd begin to fly I'd think to myself, 'What did I say then?' So between thinking back and trying to think ahead I didn't make much progress."

"Did you ever succeed in writing a play for one set of scenery?"

"Yes—finally—with 'Spite Corner.' There's only one set in that now. But I didn't waste any money. The two sets we used for the out-of-town try-out were old stuff. Of course, Johnny Golden gave me carte blanche—but, somehow, I can't bear to spend even a manager's money till I know whether people wanted the play. We took an old interior set, and to make it look like a country dressmaking shop we put shelves on the walls and loaded 'em with paper boxes and notions. And then, after that try-out, we walked out of town, leaving the whole 'production' in the little local thea-

ter. We had to build new stuff for New York anyhow, and it was cheaper to leave the old stuff where it was."

"You are a frugal author!"

"'Too Many Cooks' made money on its try-out," he answered, not unproudly; "'The First Year' went into New York with money to the good, and so did 'Spite Corner.' Well," he went on shrewdly, "an author shouldn't demand much till he finds out what he's written. All plays look great when they're fresh from the typist. But I've always been willing to take any old junk to find out if people like the play. As Johnny Golden says, 'You can always get scenery!'"

"Frank," I said, "it would be hard to tell from your plays whether you are a sentimentalist or a—No, I can't say showman; there's too much human humor in 'The First Year.'"

"I think people love to cry in the theater; I know I do," he answered without shame. "I cry when I see a beautifully acted comedy scene—that's the way it gets me. It's the interweave of sentiment and comedy that I like, the alternating currents. You can safely say that I'm for sentiment on the stage. Sentiment is not only good business, but we need it in our lives. Do you remember, Ashton, when we used to go to the ball games together?"

"Five times a week, some weeks. Sure!"

And Frank Craven talked and took me back to some of those ball games and some of the men that went along with us—one of them dead now, two of them married. He recalled the day he bought the peanuts and I the cushions, because, he said, my own upholstery was none of the best; and the day they played fourteen innings to make a score of one to nothing, and we matched for the taxi home. He just talked and brought

back the old afternoons so summerly that my mouth and eyes watered.

And then he said, "That's sentiment." And then he said, "Sentiment is remembering." And we let it go at that.

"When are you going to write your autobiography?"

"There's a book," he quickly answered, "that'll never be written. Imagine me describing the towns I played in as a youth—Council Bluffs, Cedar Rapids—and calling them by their right names. Not me!"

"Still, I don't see why you should be the only actor who hasn't written a book about himself. It looks just a little ostentatious."

"My past is too—too scattering for the fine direct drive of autobiography. I've done everything, you know, but moving pictures."

"Shakespeare?"

"Yes; but not extensively."

"How extensively?"

"Well, I'm kind of thin as a Shakespearean actor. It's hereditary. My mother, Ella Mayer, was at one time understudy for Eliza Weatherby, who was Mrs. Nat Goodwin and frequently ill. And I used to hear mother tell what the German musical director of the troupe said to her the first time she played the part: 'You play the part all right, Miss Mayer. I don't know anybody except Mrs. Goodwin what could play the part so goot as you. Of course, though, you lack the dewelopments.' And that's the way it is with me in Shakespeare, I lack the dewelopments—I guess the only part I'd really fit in Shakespeare would be the *Apothecary* in 'Romeo and Juliet.'"

"Working for a morning paper, Frank, I usually have to leave the theater before the *Apothecary* comes on. I forget what he looks like."

"He looks lean and poisoned. My father played the part with Mary Anderson, and he always kept with pride a notice by some William Winter of the time, who had written: 'And Mr. John T. Craven's *Apothecary* was a gem—it was so nice and thin.' "

"Actors," I observed, "seem to make the best parents for actors. When a business man's son tells him he wants to go on the stage his father, nine times out of ten, thinks he's crazy."

"Nine times out of ten he is," said Craven. "But you'll find a lot of actors who selected the proper parents—the Drews, Barrymores, Byron, Eddinger, Jimmy Gleason, Harry Brown. We're going to start a club called Sons of Actors—sounds sort of profane, doesn't it? There must be fifty of 'em in the Lambs. And down at Great Neck, where I live, we're looking out for tomorrow. Wynne, Hazard, Santley, Truex and I have all got offspring who'll take care of the future of the American stage. And Ring Lardner's got a backyardful. He's got to raise three to our one to supply our children with plays."

"Frank, has your wife ever got over the first time you played one of your own unstuffed heroes here and all the critics commented on your unbeautifulness.?"

"She's either outgrown her indignation or got used to me," he smiled. "Besides, she's a good business woman and realizes that homeliness is part of my stock-in-trade. I guess she also figures that when you have my kind of face nobody is worrying about how old you are or look—least of all me! Being timeproof is almost as good as being beautiful."

"And now tell me," I asked, in the interests of the art of alcoholic impersonation, "can a man play a drunken scene when he's——?"

"I've never been that way while playing one," he anticipated. "But I shouldn't think so. When a man's 'lit' he thinks he's the funniest thing on earth. I know I do. I always want to be funny when I've had one too many, and then I'm about as comical as a cremation. I've only once been in that self-confident condition on the stage. And I hasten to add that I was not acting at the time. It was at the Sunday night invitation dress rehearsal opening of 'Spite Corner,' and I got a tiny bun on. Well, I'd done the best I could writing the darned thing; it didn't seem to belong to me any more—it belonged to the public, if they wanted it. Anyway, my work was done, and I turned everything over to the stage manager and then went out and took a few Scotches and then a few more. But I got the greatest set of notices from the New York critics that you ever saw."

"On the play?"

"On the play, nothing! On my speech."

"What'd you say?"

"To understand just what I said, you should be acquainted with 'The Old Soak.' There's a character in that delightful comedy called 'Al,' and he's a boot-legger, and the catch-line of the piece is, 'Al's here!'

"Well," he chuckled, "when the applause began and somebody cried 'Author!' I tried to beat it out of the theater, with my derby hat on and my cigar in my mouth, and my tiny bun beaming all over me. But somebody grabbed me and ran me down the aisle and onto the stage. And all I said to the audience—all I could say—was:

"'Ladies and gemmen: Al's been here.'"

"And you never read such thrilling notices as that speech got."

Miss and Mrs. Janis



ON the way to the Janis suite in the Congress—G 22-24-26-28, and, for all I know, 30-32-34-36—I met a wise old theatrical producer, who told me there were just two subjects of unfailing interest to theatergoers of today—

Love and Liquor.

I was on the way to talk Love to, or at least with, Elsie, the official sweetheart of the A. E. F. (not to mention the I. O. O. F., the B. P. O. E. and the A. F. L.), and nevertheless and notwithstanding still an unwedded bachelor girl. Which is to say that, Miss Elsie willing, I was going to commit to memory her answer to the impertinent question, *Why* don't you marry?

And—well—the first dear thing that was said was said by Mrs. Janis when she said: "It takes three-quarters of an hour to get tea up—won't you have a tiny drop of old brandy?"

Never mind my scintillant reply, with which our story is not concerned. I only wanted to show that there must have been something in what the manager said, for in a jiffy we were neck-deep in the second of his "just two subjects"—and with the first ever ready to spring.

"It used to be, when a man admired a girl and wanted to show it," said Elsie—"it used to be flowers. But now it's a bottle of Gordon gin."

"As a matter of fact," she went on, "I was notoriously the drinkless wonder of my age. I didn't like the stuff. And it was my pride to be the only one at a party who didn't. Just as it would now be my pride to be the only one at a party to sit up with a schooner of Scotch. Prohibition makes you perverse."

"What under the sun did we have to talk about *before* Prohibition?" Mrs. Janis helpfully asked.

"Well, we didn't talk about drink, for one thing," said Elsie. "But now! Go to a luncheon and it starts with one of two sentences: 'I'm sorry I can't give you cocktails'; or, 'These are made from a little bottle my grandfather left.'"

"The rich don't really suffer for it," I put in.

"Yes, and that," said Elsie, "is one of the reasons I'm ag'in' Prohibition. There are fellows in our Gang at the Illinois who'd fondly love to park their shoes against a rail after the show and throw down a couple of long red ones with very low white collars. I got to feeling for and with the fellows 'over there.' They used to say, 'Those pussyfooters'll never be able to put it over; they can't get away with our beer and wine.' Wise guys they were, and I was a wise guy with 'em!"

"It breaks Elsie's heart," said her mamma, "when she thinks what our Prohibition has done to poor France."

"Think of it yourself," Elsie said. "There was France, hard up, bled, wounded and all ready to step on her glorious grapes and crush them into wine for us, her ally. There were her treasured champagnes all ready to be shipped. When—*bing! blah!* Prohibition!"

This was no moment to talk marriage. But we could always talk Gang, and we did.

"Irving Berlin advised me one day: 'Take my tip, Elsie, and don't put your Gang in uniforms.'

"I was just back—from you know what. I'd stepped over dead bodies, to sing and prance for the fellows who were still going. And here at home I'd been in the hospital and seen some of the permanent wrecks—our fellows, once so tough and straight. 'Irv,' I said, 'if America don't want to see uniforms *now*, I don't want to see America again *ever*.' I was that serious! I felt that if America could face those fellows with their chevrons and not *feel* something—well, then I'd leave America flat. Horrible threat!"

"But she's never told you," Mrs. Janis supplied, "the offers she had for big non-soldier shows."

"And isn't going to tell him," Elsie said. "Only this—when Mr. Dillingham made his magnificent proposal I said, 'No, I can't. Charlie,' I said, 'I can't go out on the stage with a lot of nude women shaking their shimmies; I'd cry all over the place. There's something—call it "spiritual" if you want to—that I've got to get out of my system.' And I told him about this show, which I'd written—written in bed, like Mark Twain (I mean the bed)—and how little it would cost, because that was the way we wanted it. And he said I was crazy anyway and crazier since the war. But to go ahead, which I did; and he never came to rehearsals—and when it was all done he said it was the only show he'd ever seen he didn't want to cut *somewhere*."

"Why didn't you show him the pay roll?" I brightly suggested.

"Oh, that was proof. I'd promised the boys, every one, fifty bucks a week, rain or shine, and warned them all that I didn't want to make a bad actor out of any man who had a good job. We've done some grading

and paving since then, since the show made good. Now nobody gets less than sixty-five."

"The one who says 'It's all wrong!' is worth seventy at least."

"Don't worry about him; he's all right," said Elsie proudly. "He was chauffing a car for Owen Moore when he came to me. Said his brother had danced on a table with me in France. I told him to send his brother around. And that night the stage manager wanted to know how many Ryans I'd ordered. I told him one. He said two'd shown up for jobs. 'I can sing a little tenor, and, anyway, I'd like to stick with the Gang,' said this Mr. Ryan, the chauffeur, your 'It's-all-wrong' man; and he stuck. Sometimes," Elsie added, "they dropped from heaven and sometimes I picked them up."

"For instance—I wanted a blonde, a female woman blonde with looks and style and—Well, you know the regular chorus or show girl type wouldn't do for the Gang; might stir civil war; imagine turning loose half-a-dozen seasoned chorus girls among those thirty-six he men! Chorus girls, of course, never look at anything less than the regular leading man in the regular theatrical company—and usually he's grabbed quick by the leading lady. But three dozen Heroes! It would have been much too much. The flizzies would have raised a riot."

"But, as I was or wasn't telling you—I was talking to Eva Le Gallienne in a hotel when along passed a stunning blonde, just what my heart had ordered. 'Who's that?' I asked Eve, who had bowed to her."

"That," said Eve, "is Miss Overhault—one of the Long Island Overhaults."

"Ask her if she wants to go on the stage."

"What!"

"*'Ask her.'*

"And Eve did. And she did. Said she'd love it.

"*'When can you join?'* I asked her.

"*'In an hour—I've got a tea. But I can break the tea if an hour's too long.'*

"*'What about your folks?'*

"*'There's only a sister. I'll telephone.'*

"And she came to rehearsal that night, and stuck, and became and is, like the rest of us, a bum!"

Elsie was in great spirits. And Elsie's mamma had gone into 24 or 32.

"I don't want to be a pest," I told Elsie, "but when are you, or why aren't you, going to marry?"

"Never!" she said, with more to come—I could feel it, and I held my peace. "I've gone this way so long, so far, that I've grown a pretty healthy sense of humor. Thanks to that, it doesn't require marriage to make me laugh or cry at this weird old world. I've got a sense of humor, let's say, but, what's more, I've got the most marvelous companion in the world in my mother."

"That then's the answer to your bachelorhood—Mother?"

"Yes; but it must not be unfairly stated. Mother—at least *I*—have a reputation of being the most carefully chaperoned girl on any stage. You'd think, from what you hear, that mother camps on a stool in the back parlor and asks every youth who tries to hold my hand what his intentions are! Why, do you know who the fellows ask for when the party is a foursome and we need another girl?"

"That exquisite 'bum,' Miss Overhault?"

"No; that exquisite 'bum,' Mrs. Janis. And when we get out, do you know who it is that has to be quieted

down and said to: 'This is supposed to be a *quiet party*'?—do you know who?"

"Elsie Janis' mamma," I answered.

"And right you are!" said mamma's Elsie.

"Lemme tell you," she raced. "There's never a wild place in Paris or New York or Chicago that I wanted to see that my mother wouldn't go along with me to see it. There never was a dump so tough my mother wouldn't go to it with me, if I wanted to go. If my tastes don't happen to be chronically dumpish, that's not mother's fault. But lemme tell you that she's *there* for any time or place. If I want to sip a jazzbo cocktail or a shimmy fizz, mother'll go with me to the awful cave where they're brewed and we'll sip 'em together. She'll do anything I ever wanted to do—and more.

"And that's only a tiny side of her companionship. She's *there* for anything that happens to me. If I stub my toe and start to fall—well, I don't land on a tack, but on mother. Show me a man like mother and I'll be willing to hear people say, 'Yes, he belongs to Janis and Janis belongs to him.' But they aren't made. And I've *looked*. And I—like Henry George—I'm for men, God love 'em! But when I gaze around a luncheon at my girl friends that used to be girls, and see most of them divorced or getting divorces, and hear them say with the salad—it always comes with the salad—'Well, Elsie, here's another luncheon and you're still a spinster!'—I can't help but notice that their note, which was one time one of pity, is now the note of envy. I tell you I'm glad of the privilege, the beauty, the hell-roaring fine companionship that comes of batching it along with mother."

Mr. Collier Under Oath



FOR eighteen years, with occasional interludes for work, I had been attempting to interview Mr. Collier.

But somebody had always upset my plans—objected, or rejected, or regretted. And that somebody always had been Mr. Collier.

In time—perhaps another eighteen years—I should have been convinced that William Collier did not want to be interviewed by me. And I daresay I'd have gone to my grave loving him for it.

But what are eighteen years in such extensive lifetimes as Collier's and mine! Why jump at conclusions?

So the other day I got an idea and ran straight to him with it. I was introduced into his dressing-room at the Cort without prelude or warning.

"Mr. Collier," I said, "I have an idea."

He did not say, "You surprise me." He was polite. He said, "Yes?" with a quick-rising inflection; and, thus encouraged, I went on to outline it:

"In this farce, 'Nothing But the Truth,' you are obliged to tell nothing but the truth for a period of twenty-four hours. Now, will you, in an interview, tell me nothing but the truth, so help you, for twenty-four minutes?"

"Sure!" said Collier, and the appointment was made for the morrow. You see, there had been noth-

ing permanent in Mr. Collier's disrelish of an interview with me.

We sat at a table that had a marine exposure, in the cafe of the Edgewater Beach Hotel. We ordered two strong cups of black coffee—large ones—and we synchronized our watches. They lacked twenty-five minutes of the hour of six.

What he said during the next sixty seconds does not matter. He could breathe and lie freely then; and I daresay he did; I hope he did. It was on the dot of 5:36 when William Collier, notoriously the world's coolest comedian, said:

"Shoot."

"Did you tell your wife and child?" I shot.

"Yes."

"Did they advise you?"

"My wife said, 'Be careful what you say.' I told her I couldn't be, I had to tell the truth. Buster said, 'Are you worrying about what you're going to answer?' I said, 'No; I'm worrying about what he's going to ask.'

"Mr. Collier, did you read Van Loan's actor story in a recent *Saturday Evening Post*, 'The Great and Only Leslie'?"

"No; but I know Charlie Van Loan; he's the best——"

"I know; you needn't perjure yourself in favor of Van. But in this very superior yarn of his there's a famous hero of the movies who once barnstormed in a very humble capacity with a road star of the one-night stand-up. This ham star was Leslie's idea of what an actor should be; and Leslie was the ham's idea of what an actor should not be."

I outlined the story for Collier, bringing up at the

situation where the great and only Leslie, in the very flower of his glory, is confronted by the ham—now an extra man in the movie concern where Leslie's slightest smile is worth its weight in radium. The ham's unchanged contempt for Leslie dangerously convinces the great and only of his own utter unworth as artist or human being.

"Has there ever been in your life," I asked Collier, "one who tore you down from high places as this ham tore down the great and only Leslie? One who could say to you, 'You are rotten,' with such deadly earnestness as to reduce you to a state of rottenness?"

"Who told you about my Uncle Ned and me?" cried Collier.

It was the first time that ever I had heard his chill, even voice cry anything; the first time I had seen any but comic amazement expressed in his serene, implastic face.

"Nobody told me," I answered truthfully. "Van's story suggested——"

"But you're not under oath, and I am," he said, incredulously. "I had an uncle that measured me up just as this ham measured Leslie. I wanted to punch him every time I saw him coming. I can see him now, sitting in an aisle seat in the front row, with plenty of room for his lame leg—telling me just by his look how rotten I am.

"I'll never forget the day my mother—God rest her soul!—said the sweetest words I've ever heard. 'Your Uncle Ned is dead,' she said. And she told me afterward that there was an expression on my face that she'd never seen there before—it was almost heavenly.

"Everything I ever did was rotten to Uncle Ned.

I remember once I pitched the deciding ball game for a public school league championship, and won it.

"'I felt sorry for you to-day,' says Uncle Ned.

"'Because I won the pennant?' says I.

"'No; because you gave that base on balls,' says Uncle Ned.

"He had a horrible laugh that cut me like a knife. You know the kind of laugh I mean—it wasn't on the level. I always had a fine company—but was rotten myself. Every flivver was a fine play which I didn't know how to act."

"Was your Uncle Ned always wrong?"

"No! You can forgive a man—sometimes—who's always wrong. But he was always right. If I said a thousand dollars, he said nine hundred and eighty. If I said, 'Some time in May,' he said, 'No; it was June twelfth,' and was right. He was an encyclopaedia of useless information. He had my goat. When I'd try a new line or bit of stage business that wouldn't get over, my wife used to say, 'Cut it out; it's an Uncle Ned.' . . . It's uncanny, your landing on him."

"Then let's talk of happier things. Who, in your opinion — barring nobody — is the greatest living comedian?"

"Chaplin," said Collier, quick as a wink.

"Why?"

"Because he can do without a word what every other comedian in the world can do only with words—because he can do that and then something more. He's a great actor, great artist, great stage director and great comedian. He's got it here." Mr. Collier touched his brow.

"Who's Chaplin's favorite comedian?"

"Well . . . of course. But in fact I was waiting

for it. I was afraid you'd forget that one. The answer to that question is 'Collier.' "

"Of all the funny little things of your own that you have uttered on and off the stage, Mr. Collier, which do you consider the funniest, the most successful from the viewpoint of a comedian?"

"The 'I've Something to Say to You' scene that I first did at Weber and Fields'. That's the funniest combination of words and knowledge I ever composed. It won't be hard to write if you use ditto marks."

It wasn't. This is Collier's masterpiece just as it ran on the notes:

ME: Mary, I've something to say to you.

SHE: You've " " " " me?

ME: Yes, I've " " " " you.

SHE: Something " " " " me?

ME: " " " " you.

SHE: To " " " " me?

ME: " " " " you!

SHE: Say " " " " me?

ME: " " " " you!

SHE: To me?

ME: " " " " you!

SHE: Me?

ME: You!

But no type may tell you how funny he was uttering it—a duologue to himself, by himself, for himself.

He chuckled when it was in the record. "That killed just four minutes," he chuckled. "Would you like to have a list of the parts I've played during and since the seven years I was with Augustin Daly?"

"This isn't your obituary."

"I feel that way."

"What do you enjoy most when you go to the other fellow's theater?"

"Weeping."

"Whose?"

"My own. I like serious, substantial, emotional plays. When they're good they get me right in the eyes. I'm ashamed to sit in a box—at any kind of a show. I've wept at comedies, too."

"Who are the harshest dramatic critics?"

"Actors. No paper could print what actors say."

"Are you critical?"

"Yes. I've yet to see a good part that wasn't better than its actor. I've never seen an actor as good as a good part."

"Then good parts don't make good actors?"

"If they did Corse Peyton would be the greatest actor in the world—he's played 'em all. If they did everybody would be playing *Hamlet*—that's a pretty good part."

"Ever fail ignominiously in a part—utterly licked by it?"

"Yes—in 'Are You My Father?' Uncle Ned should have seen me in that."

"Do you believe in reincarnation?"

"Well, one night I thought my Uncle Ned had come back as you."

"Me!"

"Yes. One night when I was playing 'The Man From Mexico' in San Francisco—the funniest piece I ever had—more than a laugh a minute—right in the funniest part of it you brought into a stage box Billy Barnes and Colonel Kowolsky, the famous sleepers—who dozed straight off and snored—and the audience laughed as I never heard an audience laugh before—but not at the show."

Perhaps that was one of the reasons why it took

me eighteen years to have this interview with Mr. Collier. But I did not press the question. I asked him if he had ever heard a good curtain speech delivered by an actor. He said:

"Yes."

"Who made it?"

"I did."

"Who wrote it?"

"I did."

"Alone?"

"Well, I had a little help."

"Whose?"

"I don't know."

"You are under oath!"

"That's the truth. It was on the opening night of 'The Dictator' in London. In the cast were Jack Barrymore, Eddie Ables, George Nash and Marie Doro. In a box were Charlie Frohman, Gillette and Barrie.

" 'Ladies and gentlemen,' I said.

"And there was a noise upstairs and a man in the gallery cried in its direction, 'Oh, shut up!'

" 'Very well,' I said, 'I will.' It was the hit of my life."

"Who's the biggest man in the American theater?"

"Georgie Cohan."

"Why?"

"Well, he's not the best actor or author or composer or dancer or playwright, but he can dance better than any other author, write better than any other actor, compose better than any other manager and manage better than any other playwright—and that makes him a very great man."

"Who's the most successful failure on the native stage?"

"We haven't had one big enough to talk about since

Mansfield died—which shows the native theater is pretty shy of real shining marks.”

“What’s the worst feature of American management?”

“Mushroom managers making mushroom stars of little nobodies who make an overnight hit playing their own little personalities. It’s an injustice to the well-trained actor who knows his business.”

“Are you a well-trained actor?”

“I am. And I can prove it. But you won’t let me give you a list of the parts I’ve played since I started as a call boy at Daly’s.”

“How many are there? It’s getting pretty close to 6 o’clock.”

“I’ve never counted. But I don’t think there’s more than a thousand.”

“Do you believe in the art of elimination?”

“I believe in it in all arts—when you are not under oath.”

“What would you advise a young actor to eliminate from his work? What are the seven deadly sins in acting?”

“I can name you seventeen. There’s the Goodwin Stammer, the Maude Adams Choke, the Warfield Tremolo, the Louis Mann Pause, the Ethel Barrymore Sob, the Foy Spray, the Gillette Repetition, the——”

“That’s seven. Time’s short.”

“I know—but I’ve got fifty seconds yet. I was only going to add the Collier Poker Face.”

“Who’s the unfunniest humorist writing for the American stage?”

“Percy Mackaye.”

“Who produces the greatest number of successful bad plays?”

“Al Woods. Hope he gets one for me.”

"Who's your favorite child actor?"

"Can I name anybody I want to?" He looked up at Buster Collier, watching us from the far doorway, watch in hand.

"Of course you can!" I said impatiently.

"All right: Henry Miller."

"And who is your favorite dramatic critic?"

"Is?" Your tenses are all wrong. It's 'was.' He is in another world now. All my favorite dramatic critics are there—with Uncle Ned."

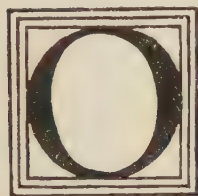
"Have you enjoyed this interview?"

"What time is it?"

"Six-one." He looked at his own watch in corroboration. He beamed.

"I am no longer under oath. Yes," he said; "I never enjoyed anything so much in my life."

Miss Barrymore and the Wits



ONCE upon a time, when she was very, very young, I had a real Interview with Ethel Barrymore—full of dates and Drama and ambitions and impressions and favorite literature and I don't know what not. And I never knew how stuffy and podgy and interview-y it was till a year later Miss Barrymore had an Interview with me and wrote her revenge complete.

That was when they wore skirts to the floor and puff sleeves.

Now, when every two or three or five years brings us together, we just sit over a cup of tea and a cigaret (and even my pipe, in the grace of her hospitality) and look at each other in friendly appraisal, and say how thinner and lovelier she's grown, and how prematurely grey my grey head continues to get, and—well, now we *don't* interview.

I forgave her when she clutched (I must say clutched) one letter from the afternoon mail and tore (nothing less) open its envelope and read it with—I vow with a blush of pleasure.

"Ah, Ethel, they still write!" I said.

"It's the first I've had from *him*. Listen: ' . . . and please send me \$3. . . . Yours very truly, Sam.' " And Sam's mother passed the precious paper to me.

I don't know just how, but presently we were talking about Sam's maternal grandfather, who was the

First Wit of the Lambs' in the sedentary days before that club had become fistrionic. And Maurice Barrymore's daughter was telling me how her father had one night met the dramatic scrutator of the *Police Gazette*, who had simplishly asked Mr. Barrymore if he'd seen the "roast" of his performance in the last issue.

"No," the actor had said, "I shave myself."

So we fell to talking of other wits and what they had said that was witty.

There was an actor who thought much of himself, but whom history has forgotten, who sought some sort of near stellar distinction in the program of a Barrie play in which he was to appear.

"How would it do," this actor asked the author, "if my name came last on the program and you printed on the line above it the word 'AND'?"

Miss Barrymore told me that Barrie had answered: "Why not 'BUT'?"

She loves Barrie as much as I hope Sir James loves her for her exquisite performance in "Alice-Sit-by-the-Fire"—which I hope she will revive some day after she has made a million dollars out of the fire-works of "Déclassée."

When we strayed from the wits we talked about the world's series. This very fine, beautiful American lady knows baseball as she knows bridge and polo; nor are they the only games to which she thrills intelligently. I was reminded of a midnight telegram from the "road" which I received from her in a newspaper office many years ago: "In four hours I shall be in the degrading act of entraining for Lincoln, Neb. Meantime will you please wire me how many rounds

and who won tonight's fight? Yours for the higher education for women, Ethel Barrymore."

And we talked about the book that once upon a time she did not write. When Ethel first went on the stage, in London, in New York, in Chicago and in San Francisco, she was forever meeting personages who said, "I held you on my knee when you were a little girl."

"They kept on saying it," she smiled, "till one night at a dinner I said that I was going to write and publish a book of elderly gentlemen and give it the telling title of 'Knees I've Sat On.'"

She put Mrs. Patrick Campbell among the wits, and Emily Stevens, too—she wished Zoë Akins, author of her dear "*Déclassée*," had been there to tell me the latest Emilyisms. But, speaking of Mrs. Pat, I thought this one was quite perfect:

"She was playing with George Alexander in London, and Alexander took her aside and said," laughed Ethel, "that she'd have to stop laughing at him on the stage."

"'I never laugh at you on the stage,' Mrs. Pat protested; 'I always wait till I get home.'"

We elected Brother John to the Order. I had never told his sister what he said to me when we first met. It was during his first engagement, a small part with William Collier in "*The Dictator*." And my friendly greeting to Ethel's little brother had been: "What makes you look so much taller on the stage?" To which Jack had solemnly answered: "Collier."

"It was as witty as yours on Sargent," I told Ethel.

"He had just painted your portrait, and when I asked if it was a good likeness you hesitated and said

it was doubtless you as Sargent saw you. 'You plus Sargent?' I suggested. And you flashed, 'Yes—and minus resemblance.'"

"I don't remember," vowed Sargent's friend, Ethel, who meant she didn't want to. "Excuse me while I ring up Main 5000 and see if Cleveland got the other game."

The Twenty-Second Street Ziegfeld



T is early at the sign of "The Midnite Frolic," whose lanterned letters used to spell "Freiberg's Dance Hall." It is early and was always early in this slice of Twenty-second street at one o'clock in the morning.

Not a cab is going. They're all coming. Happy and hippy delegates to the Republican convention are eating the two-dollar midnight table d'hôte all the way from spring onions to lady fingers. The a la carters will perform later.

Miss Josephine Taylor, *Aphrodite* of the cabaret which wheels and whirls on the central floor, hasn't yet entered her first suit of tights. Swan Wood is dancing only the dances that made Little Egypt a conservative; she hasn't yet begun really to swing and sway. Incandescents are blinking behind the heads of drum and banjo among the Five Aces of Syncopation.

Ike Bloom, impresario of these sounds and sceneries, has only just had his matutinal shave; his bald head gleams in a sudden shift of Miss Swan's spotlight—the barber should have talced it. And I am here to talk with the Twenty-second street Ziegfeld.

"It's your first perfect 'alibi' for coming out," says Mr. Bloom, and adds, "Times have changed!"

Perhaps I sigh, but Mr. Bloom doesn't. He looks

around at the fresh gay trimmings of yellow and blue, at the silken wear of his choristers, at the tables crowded with women and men who would well-dress a flower show or a horse race, and he says, slightly distending his platinum-buttoned shirt front:

"Changed? I should say! Time was when society women came in here under black veils looking for dark corners. Now their veils and heads are up. They walk into the Midnite Frolic like they'd walk into the Ritz-Carlton, and the first thing they ask the head waiter is, 'Have you got a center table?'"

"You've seen some nights in the old place, Ike."

"My boy! And some sights, too. I saw Walter Shaftel come in here the night after he'd won the Derby with *Highball* and order a glass of 'wine' for everybody in the house. I had one of the boxes—there were boxes then—decorated with his colors. He finished his drink and was on his way to the next place. He says: 'How much for that round, Ike?' 'I really don't know,' I told him. 'Well, ring up this,' says he, and hands me twenty-five hundred iron men."

"Them was the——!"

He interrupts to say he does miss one old "bunch." But there is no great pathos in this admission when he names them as "the reformers." He steps a couple of tables away mildly to caution a badged and flushed visitor not to tease the soprano, and takes up:

"I recall the night Arthur Burrage Farwell comes in here with a band of famous evangelists. I tell 'em to go as far as they like; they're welcome to convert everybody in the place. I give them the freedom of the tables; I order the drinks all around—lemonade; and when they ask for the center of the dance floor to kneel down and pray and sing 'Washed in the Blood of the Lamb,' I give it to 'em. I give 'em my jazz band,

too, which plays their accompaniment and plays it mighty damned well. One of the papers carries a story next day that was all straight except where it says I knelt and sang with 'em. That was an error. I don't sing."

Girls with candles are lighting a pretty little candle number on the stairs. Greater mimes from earlier shows in the loop are showing at tables on the firing line. Yonder is one of the best of the American leading men, and near him one of the newest of the season's dramatic stars. Comes an intermission of supping, sipping and dancing—and how some of those actor folks can dance!

But where, oh where, are the dance-hall girls of yesternight whose overlord and master was Bloom? What became of her with the violet eyes and cupreous hair whom we shall call Vera? Let Ike tell it:

"In the old nights of the dance-hall those girls knew I wouldn't stand for larceny. That was barred. They knew it was the one thing that'd make a copper out of me. So I can tell you, old man, I felt pretty sore one morning when a guy that's been here most of the night gets Vera pinched for jack-rolling him in a taxi for a hundred and ninety. She sends for me. I says I'll get her a lawyer and I'm through if she took it.

" 'I didn't, Ike,' she says; 'but here's a diamond ring worth two-fifty. You take the ring and give the guy his hundred and ninety, which I'd rather lose than spend another night in jail.'

" 'It's a cinch she got it,' says the inspector when Vera pulls off the ring. 'But I don't know about that,' says I to him; and I put Vera back on the floor and collect out of her twenty dollars a week salary.

"Well, it was more than a year before the bird

that got Vera pinched came back to old Freiberg's—and he got confidential. Maybe I encouraged his confidence. Anyway, he finally told me that that night a year ago he'd spent a hundred and ninety that belonged to his firm—and then got Vera pinched to keep from going to jail himself. I told him not to come round any more."

"How'd you tell him?"

"On the jaw. I think I broke it."

"What became of Vera?"

"Oh—I forgot to tell you what made me tell you all this! Vera was in the other night—with her husband. Mighty nice young feller, even if he is rotten rich. They've got two of the finest kids on the North Shore."

"Vera told you?"

"No—no!" protests Mr. Bloom, dismayed by my stupidity. "Vera's husband told me. I've known him for years—but of course I'm not acquainted with his wife."

"Are you making a new fortune out of the old place, Ike?"

"Not yet, but I will. Some of my friends say I'm crazy and going to lose my B. V. D.'s. But when I play a hunch I go the limit; and it's my hunch that Chicago wants what I'm trying to give it."

"You believe in hunches?"

"In mine—hunches and friendships are my religion. I'll tell you a crazy hunch I followed—Jimmy Ward; you remember Jimmy. He was flying for the Curtisses and I got stuck on him and got his release. Got a couple of planes and entered him in the Hearst Coast-to-Coast. He flew all right from Governor's Island to Hornell, where he met a mountain that was

blocking traffic. What a wreck! I was out seventeen thousand and almost flat. But I got him in his rags into Albany in front of the newspapermen and the cameras.

"And next day the printer brought me the red letterheads reading, 'Jimmy Ward, the world's greatest and youngest (he wasn't forty yet) flyer,' and within thirty days I'd cleaned up \$38,000 worth of summer park engagements. All told, I cleaned a hundred thou.

"And this hunch," he goes on, "for an all-night show in the old place, with Society clamoring for front seats instead of dark sneaks and behaving itself as it would at home (it was always the society people who made my New Year's Eves rowdy)—well, I'm going to play this hunch out if it takes my whole string. I've just telegraphed Eva Tanguay at Atlantic City to say there's five thousand for her to come and head the new bill, and I'll not stop there. I'll stick till I put this over if I have to do it with Mary Garden!"

Mr. Bloom sees me to the door, where a few cabs are now awaiting the "Home, James."

"Anything else on your heart, Ike?" I say.

"Yes," says he—"since you ask: that pipe. It's the first one that's been smoked in the place in twenty years. I hope you enjoyed it!"

About some things Mr. Bloom is still a prude.

The Second Wind of Mrs. Leslie Carter



MRS. LESLIE CARTER and I sat in her spacious living rooms at the Sherman, talking about our hair.

I was a black-haired boy and she was the most talked-about actress in the United States when I last interviewed her. Mrs. Carter was playing "Du Barry" then—or was it "Zaza"? Anyway, it was not less than twenty years ago; and now only the alternate hairs of my aging head are black, while Mrs. Carter's abundant tresses burn with the same Titian red as they did when the twentieth century was born. Science has done a wonderful job, I told myself.

But nature did a wonderfuller job in the preservation of her voice, I thought; in fact, I said it to her. "I could shut my eyes at the performance of 'The Circle' the other night," I said, "and hear you just as I did when I was a boy and you were a young woman and Miriam Michelson wrote in a book, 'Mrs. Carter has talented hair.' There is not the first gray hair in your voice."

"Flatterer!"

"It's heaven's truth."

"And do you know that Archie Selwyn arrived in Paris barely in time to save my hair?" she told me, cozily, almost woman-to-woman; and a fine picture she made with her erect and still lissome figure smartly

tailored in soft bronze wool and her high-held head hatted Parisianly with fluff and feathers of the same hue.

"I had made an appointment to have it cut," she went on, "when I walked Mr. Selwyn, all the way from New York, to ask me how I should like to come back to the stage.

"The stage?" I said—"why, I'm just going to have my hair bobbed. Everybody's doing it."

"For God's sake, don't!" screamed Mr. Selwyn. "We'll need it in the production. You wouldn't be you without your hair." And he told me his plans for "The Circle," and how he wanted me to co-star with Mr. John Drew."

"You had quite retired from the stage?"

"Yes; but unwillingly; and cutting my hair would have severed the last tie."

"You say unwillingly?"

"I never retired from the stage—it was you newspaper boys who retired me," she declared without resentment; and that amiable designation of the critics was the only token of elderliness that I detected in the speech of Mrs. Carter, wishing, as she said it, that William Winter could have lived a few years longer to have heard her call him one of the "boys."

"You boys wrote so much about my retirement that presently I found myself retired," she smiled, lifting a reproachful hand. "But what matter! I was contented in Paris, where I had a pleasant home and where a dog is not treated like a dog but like a human being."

"Really?"

"Yes; you wouldn't know Paris since the war. The dog now rules Paris."

"You approve?"

"I love my dogs. The only unchivalrous treatment that I received this time in Chicago was on account of my dogs. Hotel after hotel refused to take my dogs—the Blackstone, the Drake, the Congress, the Virginia, all the good ones but the Sherman."

"The Sherman has the European idea?"

"It has the civilized idea. But I want you to meet my daughter. I want you to meet my three daughters. Mary!"

And I was presented to Miss Mary Payne, daughter of Mrs. Carter's husband, Mr. William Louis Payne, and to Meg and Lizzie, who are beautiful white curly Selyhams. I thought Mrs. Carter said they were Selwyns until she spelled it out for me, and told me that they are derived from the Highlander and the wire-haired terrier.

The pampered pups gave me a bored look and curled up at Mrs. Carter's exquisitely shod feet (Cartier, I thought, might be her shoe man) and went silently to sleep. But Mary Payne was vividly awake, and so was her unrestrained wavy brown hair. I liked Mary Payne; and when Mrs. Carter had done talking about the dogs she told me that she was teaching the child the part of *Zaza*.

"I'm going to make her play it some day. I want her to step into my shoes—when. I suppose they'll wear out some day; . . . not that I've any thought of retiring. I've just got my second wind."

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Mr. Payne, a quiet gentleman of considerable dignity, came in and passed the time of day, and went away with Mary and the dogs for a walk by the lake. Mrs. Carter has been remembering last year's New York first night of "The Circle"; and she told me with

some emotion of her sensations at reappearing after seven years before the old and the new crowd of firstnighters.

"I've had, as you know, several wonderful first nights," she said with nothing but the truth. "But this was the most wonderful of all. It seemed that every person in the theater was standing up and holding out a friendly hand to me. Really," she went on in a desperate reach for the adequate phrase, "it made history." The words weren't much, but the tone was drama.

"You're as mad about the stage as you were a quarter of a century ago," I said in wonder.

"I know I am, and proud of it! When the lights go up and the overture begins to play, I'm like an old war horse smelling battle. My heart commences to pump and my nerves to sing and I feel like a girl again. There's a line in this part of *Lady Kitty* that tells something of what I feel. It's this: 'I shall never, never grow old!' And I shan't. My mother never grew old, and she lived to be eighty. She was young the day she died. I shall die—we must all do that—but never grow old. B-r-r-r! I don't want even to think of it. When people say to me, 'How many years ago was it that you did this, or that?' I say, 'It was yesterday, only yesterday; don't, for heaven's sake, speak of years!'"

"Does it sometimes shock you when you meet a contemporary you haven't seen for a long time?"

"How'd you guess that, Ashton Stevens? Of course it does; it shocks me terribly. I always think of my old friends as they were, unaltered by time. And when I meet them and find them middle-aged, old, it's heartbreaking; I can't stand it. But I tell myself that the artists, the great artists of the stage, don't



change—much; they are still great artists, are Julia Marlowe, Edward Sothorn, Otis Skinner, Blanche Bates, Henry Miller, David Warfield, John Drew of course, even Robert Mantell.”

“Manager across the street had to fight with him last season to keep Mantell—in the sixty-ninth year of his age—from playing *Romeo*,” I interpolated.

“That’s the spirit!” applauded Mrs. Carter, and she was applauding not the manager but the actor. “Growing old is only a state of mind. Not that I’m a Christian Scientist, either, but I refuse to get in that state of mind. I can close my mind against anything, anything,” she went on vehemently. “When they used to publish and say terrible things about me I could close my mind and tell myself that these things were not being said about me but about some strange, remote, interesting, historical character.

“No matter,” she added slowly, “what anybody says, it can’t alter your estimate of yourself. I know what I am. And my answer to anything anybody says is, ‘I’m here!’ ”

“I had to put away my notes and was about to go when Mr. Belasco’s name was spoken—I forget by whom or in what connection—but I clearly recall her words when the name of the manager who molded her to fame came up.

“I have not spoken to Mr. Belasco for sixteen years,” she volunteered. “I have seen him once within that time; we were as near as you and I are now; but we did not speak. And I was, for a while, sorry that we had not spoken. But now I’m glad we didn’t. There’s a little altar within me in which the David Belasco that I knew is enshrined—and for all the world I would not have it changed.”



## Consistently Savoy and Brennan



Y GOD! He's coming in!" I heard cried in a hoarse contralto as John Garrity shot me into the dressing room.

We were back stage at the Garrick, where "The Greenwich Village Follies" was the tenant, and for an awful instant I fancied we had broken into the chamber of a prima donna without any clothes on. A long naked back was dodging from view behind the ample skirts of a ladies' maid, and my heart was jiggling with embarrassment when my eye caught the welcome sight of a pair of pants. Checkered they were, and belonged to Mr. Jay Brennan, who sat in them at the back of the room.

"Welcome!" he said softly, lowering his blue eyelids and fluttering their lashes as is his wont. "It's Mr. Stevens, Bert."

Mr. Savoy came up from behind his ladies' maid partially reclad; which is to say that his dresseress had buckled him into a pink corset. Thus attired, he greeted me man to man with, "Sit down, Mr. Stevens—at your own risk!" And after the retreating manager he called, as he adjusted his red bobbed wig, "If you hear anybody getting killed in here, Mr. Garrity, pay no attention!"

Five minutes and we were as peaceful as a disarmament conference. Time was, they told me, when

Savoy and Brennan looked on the likes of me as on an old school Russian with a knout. Oh, but I had been a bad boy to the artists of female impersonation, invariably spoiling their newspaper and breakfast for them the day following a Chicago opening. But this time, here on a chair by the door, while Mr. Savoy painted his smile, I was almost human. They went so far as to wish I'd been at last night's party.

"Really, Stevens," said Mr. Savoy—and his words seemed to come from the heart—"you should have been with us."

"That's Bert's new line for next year—'You should have been with us.' How do you like it?" inquired Mr. Brennan.

"I think it will become immortal along with 'You must come over' and 'I'm glad you asked me,'" said I, quoting with mixed emotions.

"It was the other one that really put us on the map as destroyers of the English language," said Mr. Savoy.

And this reminded his panted partner of a telegram sent by Charles Dillingham to Morris Gest on the occasion of Mr. Gest's securing the lease of the Century Theater and Roof without, perhaps, full realization of all the obligations entailed. "Dillingham," said Mr. Brennan, "wired Gest, 'You don't know the half of it, dearie'; and the newspapers picked up the telegram and Bert's line became famous over night."

"Much as I like to talk about myself," beamed Mr. Savoy, "I feel that I must change the subject long enough to introduce you to Mrs. Jones."

So their big motherly dresseress and I shook hands, and I said something about a woman doubtless being

more sympathetic for an act like theirs than a man.

"You're right, Stevens," said Mr. Savoy. "They tell me Mary Garden's got a valet, but as for me, I contend it takes a woman to understand a woman's clothes."

"Mr. Eltinge had a Jap for years, but now that he's tried a woman he wouldn't have any other sex in his dressing room," Mrs. Jones herself attested.

"Besides," Mr. Brennan contributed, "you can't depend on a man in a show like this, with so many girls in it. Just when you want him to lace you up he's out in the wings with the women."

"And why put temptation in the poor devil's way?" cried Mr. Savoy to all Randolph street; and for me, he added, "Anyhow, Steve, I always feel safer in a woman's hands."

That was Bert Savoy's character, and he was going to stick to it!

"Believe me, Ashton," Mr. Savoy was saying, and saying passionately, as Mrs. Jones helped him with a change, "it's the women that lead me on to say the awful things I say on the stage. Out in front they lead me on with their knowing laughter, and from home they write or telephone me little feminine things which they have heard and which they think will betray womankind in our act. One of the chorus girls was telling me to-day that she'd asked a new chorus girl if she'd ever seen Grant's tomb, and she answered she didn't know he had one."

"But there's nothing bold in that one," Mr. Brennan objected. "Tell him about the girl that took the man out to dinner where the lights were dim and the music soft and the wine cold, and he said, 'I've never been in a place like this before,' and she said, 'My God! I'm out with an amateur!'"

So Mr. Savoy told me; and, not getting it quite right, they both told me, and I think I added a line or a word or something until it was a noble specimen of the third-rate gag.

"But I'll never tell another on the stage like that one I told just now," said Mr. Savoy. "Ashton, I'm glad you weren't out in front."

"What was it?" I asked in the interests of censorship.

"Well, Jay was saying that the house detective said a man jumped out of a tenth-story window at three o'clock this morning, and I said the man must have been listening at our keyhole. You should have heard the women in the audience laugh! They screamed. It was terrible; it was too much; it jarred. I wouldn't pull that joke again, not even with Charles Dillingham in the house—and he always eggs us on, and's going to star us next year, maybe, in 'You Must Come Over,' written by Avery Hopwood. So far as I'm concerned, that joke is out. Once was too much."

"Tell Mr. Stevens about the Spanish beauty who tried to kill herself when we first worked for Dillingham," said Mr. Brennan by way of compromise.

"Her name," said Mr. Savoy, "was Tortalita Valencia—Jay can spell it—Jay's the speller of the firm—and she was with us in 'Miss 1917' and had a poison ring, guaranteed to kill with one bite. She flopped the first night and came by our dressing room door sucking that big pearl ring with the death in it. 'She's murdering herself,' I yelled, and went at her to relieve her stomach. I was rough, but sincere. There was a fight all over the stage, before the others knew what I was trying to do, and it was some fight, Ashton; you should have been with us. Dillingham would have died of rage if he hadn't laughed so much."



"He said his wife heard about it and was going to sue for a divorce and name Savoy and Brennan.—Quick, Bert, there's your cue."

Mr. Savoy ran for it, Mr. Brennan following him with shorter steps; and it occurred to me that of the two Mr. Brennan would make the more ladylike impersonator, if that were the idea, which, of course, it isn't.

Mrs. Jones was talking to me like a woman well paid and placed. "They're wonderful," she said. "They're more modest than the girls," she said. "They' just like my own boys," she said, "and when one of 'em gets to grumbling at the other, I say, 'Maybe he's nervous to-night, so don't pay any attention,' and smooth it over."

"A girl was just telling me," said Mr. Brennan when the couple came back, "that she and another girl passed a book store next door to a picture house where Douglas Fairbanks was being shown in 'The Three Musketeers,' and the book store window was full of the Dumas romance. 'Ain't the printing press wonderful?' said the other girl—'they've got the book out already.' Not so good, eh? You tell him, Bert, about the time you made Edison laugh."

"It was at a banquet to the great inventor, and I did my darnedest, Ashton. And when I got back to the show I told one of the girls I didn't give a damn—the very word I used—what the audience did for me to-night, because I'd just told one or two that made Thomas Edison laugh. 'Did you know,' she asked me, 'that Edison's deaf?'—I don't think so much of that, either. Purity is all right, but don't overdo it. Not this season. Because this season, Ashton, is a very blase season for actor folk, and requires lots of pepper. If ever there was a season, Ashton, when I felt like

letting down my hair and being the woman I oughtn't to be, this is the season.

"But my type, the type of woman I represent," Mr. Savoy proceeded, "won't permit me to be too abandoned. You know the type, Ashton, the type of woman that knows everything and knows nothing; that wants to make you believe how bad she is and never gives herself a chance to be bad—laughs herself out of it. I'm that way myself; I never have what you would call a perfect good time—I always talk myself out of it.

"But as I say," he went on, enlarging the character, "this is a blasé season and there's such a thing as being too conservative. This is no season for poise and particularity (you spell it, Jay), and the thing for a poor girl is to have her room rent paid in advance."

Mr. Savoy's wig was off, exposing a highish, baldish forehead. From a bedizened and unlovely woman of the night he had been momentarily transformed into a good-looking man who might have been author of a book or president of a rubber company or proprietor of a hotel.

"Do you ever appear on the stage with your own bald brow?" I asked Mr. Savoy.

"I wouldn't resort to such a thing!" he flared, "I've never in my life got out of my character for an audience—I have too much respect for their intelligence. Nothing could induce me to walk mannish for them, or say a basso 'Hello, Bill!' or pull a wig. I'd never pull a wig on an audience."

"Do you think female impersonators ought to get married?"

"Yes, Ash, I do," answered Mr. Savoy, who is single.

"And then," Mr. Brennan completed, as he fluttered his blue lids, "when they felt the act flopping, they could pull the wife instead of the wig."

## That Adorable Laurette Taylor



REMEMBERING Mr. J. Hartley Manners' disesteem for the cinema, I went up to the Congress Hotel and asked Mr. and Mrs. Manners to come with me to the picture show. The author of "Peg o' My Heart" was polite but firm. His "thank you" was lost in the heartiness of his "no." But the partner of his plays and sorrows declared that she dearly loves a picture—when it's good; dotes on them—when they're good. So only Mrs. Manners (which of course is equally to mean Miss Laurette Taylor) came along to the movies.

Michael started with us, but she didn't last. This veteran male impersonator of the terrier in "Peg" is growing old and sedentary. She parked her tail heavily in the dead center of Jackson boulevard where it cuts into Michigan avenue, congesting traffic and crimsoning the face of a furious cop.

"Briggs ought to draw a picture of this for 'When a Fellow Needs a Friend,' " Miss Taylor observed as we turned and towed Michael home.

Now we were quite free. The sun shone on the avenue, and I think it shone on as attractive a girl as ever privately filled the rôle of wife and mother. Black was her wear all the visible way, from her sewed silken hat to her rounded suede slippers; a curiously lusterless black, lit here and there by tiny flashes of white—as, say, the little white beads unornately sewed

on the veil-like stuff at her neck. But my poor powers of description crumble. I can only say that to an outsider Mrs. Manners would have appeared widowesque—that an optimistic soul might have said that her costume symbolized Hope.

It was very young black, but no younger, I swear, than the pale, animate, big-eyed, little-girl face on which the sun shone this perfect day in June.

I picked out a young show. I took her to Orchestra Hall, my favorite picture palace, to see Jackie Coogan in "Peck's Bad Boy." But we were too old for that. Mammamas were reading the titles aloud to children. We moved from the right to the left side of the house, and still mammamas were reading aloud.

"I don't believe Irvin Cobb wrote all those titles," said Miss Taylor, giving Mr. Cobb the benefit of the doubt. "What do you say," she suggested, "if we go and see Mary Pickford?"

I said "Fine!" and we went—to one of those ambiguous picture places on the north side of Madison street, where there's but one musician in the orchestra and sometimes he's not there. We went and saw and relished Mary Pickford in "Through the Back Door." And Miss Taylor laughed and sighed when Miss Pickford's young man ran from her directly she told him the little Belgian children were "hers"—laughed and sighed and provokingly said on the end of the sigh:

"All men respect a mother!"

I forget what it provoked—but let's hope it wasn't too respectful.

I remember her answer. Her answer was a detachment in which she praised Mary Pickford and said that if "Peg" were to be screened for any actress but herself she'd like to see Miss Pickford do it.

"But you'll play Peg for the pictures yourself?"

"Yes," she said, "now that I've seen myself in a test. And that reminds me of a picture manufacturer who offered me a certain incredible sum to play for the screen. I told him his figure fascinated me.

" 'But first, of course, you'll make a test,' he said.

" 'Well, if I make a test and you still want me,' I told him, 'it will cost you just twice the amount you've named.' And he couldn't see it. He couldn't see that my proposition, calculating on the chance of my failing to make a decent test picture, was a sporting proposition—that I was willing to take a chance and he wasn't."

"Did Fannie Hurst take a chance when she sold you the dramatic rights to 'Humoresque'?"

"I'll tell you about that in the dining-room of the Drake—I'm famished."

"How do you look to yourself in the test?" I asked in the cab.

"I've got to admit," she laughed, "that all the pretty Irish in me comes out."

We sat by a window in that vast beautiful dining-room and looked out where the lake was putting up a fairly oceanlike surf. That is, she looked out. I looked at her. Such a picture on such a day isn't conjured every week for me. And the waiter must have attended to his business, too—everything seemed to come along very well for a new hotel. I looked and listened. Idle and musical was her talk. She has a witchery for words. We'd come to cigarets when "Humoresque" came back.

"The Jews," she said, "write to me, 'How dare you think you can play *Mrs. Kantor!*' And the Irish write, 'What makes you want to play her?' And everybody thinks it's the screen success that's made me want to



play this Jewish mother on the stage. Now the truth is I read the story when it was first published and was, you might say, the first one to act it. I cut it down to a dramatic reading twenty-five minutes in length, rehearsed it, and would have read it at an Actors' Fund benefit if the twenty-five minutes hadn't been too long. As it was, I'd read it at a dozen dinners when Fannie Hurst called me up and asked me to look at a play she'd just finished. I told her the only play she could interest me in was 'Humoresque.'

" 'I've seen you play lots of things and you're a good actress,' said Fannie, 'but I'll be frank with you—I've yet to see the first Christian who can perfectly counterfeit the Jewish accent.'

" 'Maybe there's something in that,' I said, 'but what do you say if I go over and read *Mrs. Kantor* to you?'

"Fannie took a chance. I found her with a manager's check for a thousand dollars and a contract wanting only her signature. 'Don't sign, Fannie, till I speak my piece,' I said, and read her my twenty-five-minute abridgment of her story. Her answer was to inclose the check with the contract in the return envelope. 'Humoresque' was mine."

"Why do you want to do it—just a feat of versatility?"

"No; hardly that at all. I want to play an oldish woman while I'm still young enough to play girls; before older parts are forced on me. But it's not that, either. The real reason is the sense of beauty that I find in the character and in the play. In that woman there is something of the beauty that Rembrandt saw among the lowly, and I want to try to realize it on the stage. What're you thinking of so solemnly?"

"Oh, another kind of beauty—and I'm wondering



how the devil I'll ever find words to tell a newspaper how you look to-day!"

"Give me that sheet of paper and I'll help you out. I say, my dear man, where'd you get this paper?"

"It was just some ragged scratch paper I saw on Hartley's desk and swiped."

"Scratch paper? It's my best note! Pencil, please."

And the lines appended here are identically the ones she swiftly wrote for me, only that several of Miss Taylor's ubiquitous dashes have been swapped for periods, which she scorns:

"She was dressed in the prevailing mode—dull, dull black, with a suggestion of white on the cavalier cape slung back from her upright slender shoulders. She looked pretty, but the thing I liked best was the decided appearance of widowhood. I tried to forget that we had left Hartley, fair, fat and thirty, on the sofa at home."



## Louis Wolheim, Ph.D.



WENT up in the Blackstone elevator wondering what sort of man would be Louis Wolheim, who acts *Yank the Stoker* so thunderingly well in O'Neill's "The Hairy Ape." All I knew about him—and I knew that but vaguely—was that he had taught the higher mathematics in a university and that this was the first part to get him talked about as an acting man.

"Once a college professor, always a college professor," I said to myself, and prepared to meet a large, muscular scholar who would no doubt feed me afternoon tea and talk literature beyond my means. I think I expected to find an athletic Doctor Johnson, an unsedentary Gilbert K. Chesterton. And I had no doubt he would be wearing a morning coat.

I have yet to discover what kind of coat Mr. Wolheim does wear. He opened the door to me in his shirt—white rough stuff with a black tie hanging from a low soft collar. "What a neck!" I was noting when his hand met mine. Then it was, "What a paw!"

I have seen taller men and thicker, but he seemed to be the most giantlike I'd ever encountered this side of the ring or the mat. Everything about him is big, even his voice. His nose is the bigger for being flattened at the bridge—I know not whether by God or man. It is this irregularity of the nose that completes the suggestion of ancient sculpture—say Michael

Angelo plus accident. His hair brushes darkly back from a vast retreating forehead, and his mouth and chin are thick and heavy.

It is the face of a fighting man—in which are set, under bristling brows, brown eyes of irreconcilable humor. His eyes, I found, are the man.

We went straight to the play and his part.

"I didn't want to take the part at first; it was too damn important. Hell, why give it to me and take a chance on wrecking the whole damn production?" And I observed without sorrow that his speech was neither that of the pedagogue nor the play actor.

Himself I found as plausibly and unprofanely profane as the hairy one of his impersonation. Swears are emitted by Mr. Wolheim without sting or passion; they are only catch-words, slang, color. Profanities may be his subtle protest against the pomp and circumlocution of the collegian—but that theory is rather metaphysical, and there is nothing metaphysical about Wolheim—he is all "there."

"A dramatic writer," he went on, "is so damn dependent on interpretation. A book can take its time to get found out. But you know how it is with a play that starts wrong—the damn thing just curls up and croaks."

"And nothing's so dead as a dead play," said I, hastily adding, "as some old Stagirite has said," and then regretting the addition with the thought that now I might have diverted him into Aristotle.

But, "What the hell chance has a play got to come back when some lousy actor has killed it?" he went right on. "'Why in God's name a dub like me?' I said when I'd read the play. 'I've had no experience but four or five bum parts; I'll be a holy stench. Whyinell should I be picked?' Because I argued that here was

great stuff, here was something that needed telling. It called for trumpets, I told Hopkins. 'Why give it to a long penny whistle like me?' That's the way I talked—and then," his eyes smiling, "surrendered to better judgment."

"All I know about acting," quoth Mr. Wolheim, "which is mighty damn little, I learned from Lionel Barrymore, a great actor, by God! And all he ever told me was: 'Don't act!' Oh, maybe I've got one idea of my own, something like reading a line every time as though it's the first time. Every man can express himself if you can only get it out of him spontaneously—get me? I've heard actors, called down at rehearsal, begin to argue with the stage manager, and I've thought if they'd only talk their lines as they talk their damn argument, whatthehell, they'd be all right.

"So far as I can see," he boomed on unaggressively, "the acting you can believe is a sort of self-hypnosis. I've seen Lionel, yawning and stretching in his dressing room, and I've said, 'Whyinell don't you go to bed before morning?—then you wouldn't be dead at night.' And he's said, 'This isn't being dead, Wolly, you damn fool; this is just getting this fellow ready for the scene in which he's supposed to be all in.' Self-hypnosis."

"Where'd you teach mathematics—Cornell?"

"Hell, no; at a school in Ithaca while I was taking a Ph. D. at Cornell," replied Dr. Wolheim.

"How'd you become an actor?"

"I'd been in Mexico, on an engineering job, and met up with Lionel, who said, 'Why don't you come into the movies with me?' It sounded like an adventure and I went. And the thing caught me. Damme, if I didn't seem to click! I stuck around the lot for four or five years, getting some pretty good parts with

Lionel, with a hell-roaring fight between us in every damn picture—we put up some peaches! And when Lionel played in 'The Jest' in New York I followed him to the stage.

"That's to say, I rehearsed the part of his brother, the big guy Gabrillo, and got cold feet, and was tickled to death when the picture I was working in at the time got delayed and wouldn't let me leave it. I was so nervous-scared I sweated through my coat. But I kept hanging round rehearsals of 'The Jest.' Lionel had to fight with a super in one of his scenes, and they didn't seem to be able to get the right kind of super. So I said, 'Hell, let me play him'—and Lionel and I had a scrap to the queen's own. And I became a stage actor in a part without a line.

But toward the end of the season the fellow that played the jailer left, and they gave me his part. Scared? I was as sick as a sick woman, with fright. But once I got out on the stage and opened my fool trap, the words came bumping out of me and I didn't give a damn. Whatthehell, if this was acting, I was for it!

"Next," the Doctor of Philosophy amiably recounted for my record, "I played a peasant, just a 'bit,' in 'The Letter of the Law'; then a bum Mexican general in 'The Broken Wing.' That makes how many parts?"

"Three."

"Well, you wouldn't believe the fourth part I played—and got away with!" He laughed a gale.

For a wild guess I was about to offer one of the witches in "Macbeth," when he saved me with: "I played the *First Gentleman of Europe* in 'The Fair Circassian,' the Prince Regent who became George the



Fourth. Me. But whatthehell, I got by. And my fifth was an old Jew in 'The Idle Inn,' an old bird with a beard."

"Meantime, was Lionel saying anything?"

"To me? Hell, no. He's too white to give a man the absolute accolade, too much of a fellow to speak the sign manual of approval. He'd cuss, and say, 'You big son-of-a-stiff, that's not half lousy!' but never the voice of royalty. Lionel? God, no!"

"What was part number six?"

"This one in 'The Hairy Ape'!"

"How'd you come to get cast for it?"

"I don't know actually. Only this I know. After Lionel's opening in 'The Claw'—which I had helped translate from the French—O'Neill and his wife were among the little crowd at supper. And he and I talked; but not of O'Neill's next play, which was to be 'The Hairy Ape.' And a few weeks after that I was notified that O'Neill wanted me for the part."

I was at this point dying to ask Mr. Wolheim if, in his talk with Mr. O'Neill at supper, he had cussed as casually for him as he was now cussing for me. But I feared to make him conscious. I feared to hear him say, "Whatthehell! Can that swear stuff when you write the damn piece for the paper!"—the doing of which would be as fatal to the flavor of his interview as a policeman's blue pencil would be to his role in "The Hairy Ape." And I also feared that my question might suggest in his mind, as it did in mine, another: "Mr. Wolheim, do you think your own personal vocabulary influenced the creator of *Yank*?" To which a gentleman of his modesty could only reply with perjury at worst. So I very brilliantly said nothing at all.

"The manuscript was sent to me and I saw a tremendous play," he went on, "and, as I've told you, I

said: 'Why risk the big part on a fellow who's more than likely to do it irreparable injury?' And this is no damn mock modesty on my part, no bum humility, see? I believed in the play beyond any manuscript I'd ever read. . . . And I don't know what I'm doing in the part, except believing it, every damn word. It's not unlikely that if I got another part of the same importance, on the strength of this, I'd fall flat. Anyway, acting's been a damn fine adventure."

"How about part number seven?"

"Who knows? I'm under no contract. Nobody had to 'feature' me; Hopkins just did it without being asked or asking. But who remembers whether you're 'featured'? I can forget it myself. And I'll bet after 'The Age' is over I recede into the ranks of among those present. But, hell, if you're damn fool enough to want to be an artist, you can paint miniatures!"

"You expect——?"

"I expect," said Louis Wolheim, with an ironic grin, "absolutely nothing; and that's about what I'll get. Whatthehell! that'll be an adventure, too."

## Miss O'Ramey Concentrates



OW, remember," said Miss Georgie O'Ramey, the comic lady of "Leave It to Jane," as she toddled me from the La Salle Theater to the La Salle Hotel, "the lunch is on *me* this time."

"*This* time?" I transposed her italics.

"You can't have forgotten that it was your lunch when you interviewed me last time—when I was the new soubrette with Kolb and Dill in the Weberfields pieces in San Francisco, and told you my real Jewish name, and how I took this one because everybody loves an Irishman.

"Why, it was only sixteen years ago next April—and nobody in the company would speak to me for weeks after it was printed—and I got my salary raised. You *must* remember!"

"Of course; it was on a Wednesday."

"Wonderful! I always said," she cried, "that you have the most wonderful memory in the world."

She had engaged a far table in the large dining-room that is musicless but for the colorature of captive canaries. She had ordered new-mown strawberries, and eggs *Turque*, with an extra deep stain to the dark sauce, and silvern pots of golden Oolong.

There were crisp amber slices in the gleaming

toast-rack, but they were no crisper than the speech of Georgie O'Ramey.

I looked under the wide brim of her flower-decked picture hat at a still young, oval face with regular, geometric features and the most irregular sort of gray-green acting eyes—eyes that squint or pop or swoon or sparkle at the owner's will. (I think she could make them bark.)

Then I said:

"Does a comic woman care about her looks?"

"Do you think she'd be wearing her Easter hat two weeks before Easter if she didn't? Your question is unmanly."

"I was thinking of the awful things you wear on the stage."

"I'll wear anything for comic character. I'll wear the parlor curtains or the oilcloth from under the kitchen stove—if it's clean. Dirt isn't funny—I don't care whether it's in your costume or your lines. I'll wear anything that's clean—and in character. I'd even wear a bustle made out of your Sunday interviews."

"Speaking of character," I retaliated, "did you ever play the beautiful heroine?"

"Yes—that is, almost. Al Woods cast me and canned me in the part of *Valorie West* in 'The Common Law.'"

"*You played Valorie West!*"

"I rehearsed the part for three weeks—till one day Al Woods saw a rehearsal. He still owes me a week's salary for the third week—but I haven't the heart to remind him."

"Why did he 'can' you?"

"The why isn't important—it was the how. I was

acting for all I was worth at this rehearsal. I was snaking and emoting all over the place. I coiled up to George W. Hero and I said to him with meaning in every syllable:

"I don't want to marry you—but—but I want to be everything in the world to you."

"And Al Woods spoke up without removing his cigar:

"In a minute you'll be touching that guy for five. That's the way you play *Valorie West*. Get out!"

"And I got. I've got to give myself credit for right then, with the assistance of Mr. Woods, retiring forever from beautiful heroines.

"That's the first and last time I ever tried to be an actress. I immediately set my powers of concentration at work on something else."

"Your what?"

"My powers of concentration. Anything that ever came to me in this business I got through concentration. And I've got everything I ever really wanted—everything but a child."

"How do you work it?"

"You just wish and wish for something and keep on wishing. And one day it happens."

"Always?"

"Always—with the two exceptions noted."

"Give me an example?"

"Of course. I wanted Edith Hallor out of our show. I wanted her to leave 'Leave It to Jane.' I concentrated on getting her out. She's out."

"Jealous?"

"Not on your life! No eccentric character is jealous of a straight lead. She was a disturbing influence to discipline—acted as though she owned this

piece and had an option on all the other music shows in town.

"She'd miss performances and give us all the laugh. It was bad for everybody, bad for the property. So I concentrated on getting Miss Hallor out, and I kept on concentrating, harder and harder."

Miss O'Ramey's eyes were all green now with bright opalescent fires.

"And finally she not only stayed away from our shop, but, after leaving us flat, went and sat with the audience at the opening of the Woods Theater. Her doctor said the diversion would be good for her nerves! I guess he meant nerve. Anyway, she's out. And now I can have time to concentrate on something amiable."

Miss O'Ramey looked at me. Her eyes were largely gray now, and I hoped she was giving me a spleenless concentration. I should hate to lose my job just as the easy spring is approaching.

"What would you do, Miss O'Ramey, if you found somebody—say a sister player—concentrating against you?"

"I'd concentrate back at her. I love nothing better than a fight. I'm Irish—via Jewish."

"Where'd you get your comic touch?"

"Snitched it."

"Stole——?"

"Yes; swiped, snitched. I imagine I go to bed every night feeling much as our composer, Jerry Kern, does when he lays him down and says to himself: 'That fellow's song is a go. Now, how can I snitch it and turn it around so as to make it a go for me?' But at that, Jerry's the only man in the world who can paint the lily and improve it."



"The funny folk must love to see you in the audience!"

"I don't snitch anything from *them*. I never snitch from comedians. I'm essentially a burlesque woman: I learn from serious actors."

"I remember seeing you in Maxine Elliott's company when she opened her New York theater. What did you learn from her?"

"What not to do."

"Did Mr. Woods' five dollar remark teach you anything?"

"It didn't teach me anything, but it proved I had a blush left."

And over our dessert she talked about what she had learned from the great of stageland, from the near-great, and from Sir Herbert Tree.

"Although," she put in slyly, "I never could hope to be as comically Jewish as dear Sir Herbert."

"What did you ever learn from seeing Ethel Barrymore?"

"Not to let myself get fat."

"From Mrs. Fiske?"

"How to enunciate."

"From Louis Mann?"

"Speed—how never to kill a good part in a good play by dragging it out with actor's elaboration. And modesty I learned from him, too."

"From your work in the movies?"

"That acting is only what it seems and that twenty-five dollars a week is no salary for a decent girl."

"Did the war teach you anything, Miss O'Ramey?"

"Yes; it taught me never to use the abominable word, camouflage."

"It was raining, wasn't it, on that April day fifteen years ago, when you first interviewed me?" said Georgie O'Ramey, taking the check from my side of the table, with a reproachful glance at the waiter.

"Or just had been. Wasn't there a rainbow?"

"Of course—the rainbow! What a wonderful memory!—Only two-ninety! This is the cheapest first-class interview I ever had.—And it was a Wednesday. Think of your remembering that after all these years!"

"What would you have said if I'd said it was a Saturday and snowing?"

"I suppose I would have said, 'Wonderful!' I've always said," she said, "that you have the most wonderful memory in the world."

## Why Managers Don't Love Mr. Bennett



HE notes for this interview are written on the back of a green laundry list which Richard Bennett plucked from a nail as we went out the stage door of the Princess. He said it would harmonize with our chop suey.

HE was in high spirits. He had just died with pitiless realism the death of *Robert Mayo* in "Beyond the Horizon," and the reaction was perfect.

Mr. Bennett never cries over his own death scenes; he was dry of eye and humor. On our way to the terrible dish he loves he talked lightly of fall hats, Joseph Medill Patterson, shaving creams, motor cars and caps, Joseph Conrad, Abraham Lincoln, Hinky Dink and a necktie board that irons 'em while you sleep.

Confronted by his fatal dish in a dim-lit den in Wabash avenue, Mr. Bennett himself introduced the subject of American theatrical managers; among whom the unpopularity of this very fine actor is almost unanimous.

"I should like," he said, "to play in some sort of Oriental 'Way Down East' where I'd have to eat this stuff every performance. I never in my whole life had a chance to eat real food on the stage till I got in 'Passers-By'—and then Alf Hayman, in the interests of economy, changed the property plot to read *papier*

*make*. I guess he's the tightest manager I ever played for."

"Who's the most generous?"

"C. F.—nobody's as generous to the actor as Charlie Frohman was. He never lost by it, either. He's the one manager that never lost a star."

We appeared (it was only an appearance) to leave the managers when the talk somehow shot over to McIntyre and Heath and their school of blackface, two disciples of which, I learned, owe their trade name to Mr. Bennett. Said he:

"They saw my name up in the 'Damaged Goods' sign, and one says to the other, 'Let's grab that name and split it.' You be Bennett and I'll be Richard.' So they called themselves Bennett and Richards. I see they're about to go into New York in 'Broadway Brevities,' along with a lot of other blackfaces—Eddie Cantor, Bert Williams, George Lemaire—I don't know how many."

"I met Jolson this evening and he was telling me," I told Bennett. "He said he'd just wired Lee Shubert: 'Hope the show is a great success. If it isn't, you and Jake black up.'"

"Why," I asked him, "are you the most unpopular actor with the managers?"

"The prime reason's because I'm an actor with a manager's point of view," Bennett answered with vim. "I've proved too many of 'em wrong at their own game. And of course there are individual reasons; they've said things and I've said things—especially I've said things. Now there was Ollie Morosco——" and a smile haunted the plastic lip of Mr. Bennett.

"Why doesn't Morosco love you?"

"Because I said I'd rather be in a Henry Arthur Jones failure than in a Morosco success."

"Why doesn't Al Woods love you?"

"Because I said he'd gone bed-bugs and needed a vermifuge."

"Why does Broadhurst regard you coldly?"

"Because," smiled Bennett, "I said he'd read the third act of Brieux' 'Maternity' to write 'Bought and Paid For.'"

"Why doesn't Winthrop Ames take you to his heart?"

"Because I also have intelligence."

"Why don't the Selwyns send flowers to your first nights?"

"Because Edgar would prefer to send them to my funeral. Time and again in stock in the West I've played his 'Pierre of the Plains' and got a bigger run than he got in the original New York production. I've not only done that with his play and his part, but I've told him about it."

"What's Joseph Grismer got against you?"

"Nothing but the fact that I told Alexander Woollcott, critic of the *New York Times*, that 'Way Down East' was made out of Charles Reade's 'The Course of True Love Never Did Run Smooth.'"

"Why are you not a favorite in the Shubert offices?"

"Jake won't have me around because I knew his brother Sam when Jake was the office goat. Now Jake treats me and everybody else the way the office used to treat him."

"Why doesn't Belasco love you?"

"But he does!" Bennett laughed; and added: "I've never played in a Belasco production."

It was but a step from managers to women stars,

in many of whose services Bennett had toiled as leading man, frequently to their great disrelish. He had a way of pocketing the performance. I take it that you remember his delicious Scotchman, played with Maude Adams in "What Every Woman Knows."

"C. F.," he said, "would sometimes look at me more in sorrow than in anger and call me his star-killer. But one time he was glad I'd killed.

"That was when I played with Carlotta Neilson in 'Diana of Dobson's.' I got some laughter out of my part on the opening night, and Miss Neilson seemed to be paying more attention to what I was doing than to her own work. She fell into an emotional faint after the last curtain. She said I shouldn't have got those laughs in a play that presented a serious episode in the life of a shop girl. She said on my account the play would have to close.

"I saw C. F. next day and told him now I'd done it—insulted his star and ruined his play.

"'Dick,' he said, 'it's the biggest thing you've ever done for me. I've just received a note from Miss Neilson in which she says she'd like to withdraw. I've hastened to accept the withdrawal. You've saved me from a five years' contract with a temperament.'"

"Dick," I said, in the interest of history, "did Maude Adams like to have you around?"

"Don't remind me!" he sighed. "But since you do, I'll tell you a telegram I sent to Maude the night she opened in 'Chanticleer.' It said:

"I congratulate you on the realization of your fondest ambition—at last you are your own leading man.'"



## When Sophie Tucker Kissed a Critic



HAND fell heavily on my arm, and for an instant—I know not why—I thought it was the hand of my competitor and my friend, Percy Hammond of the *Chicago Tribune*. But the blow was followed by a laugh of equal weight, and even ere I turned in the crowd I recognized the friendly thump and laugh as Sophie Tucker's.

"What have I ever done to you that I should come to this town and play twelve weeks and never see you, or hear from you, or not even get a 'Hello, Sophie!' in the paper?" Sophie wanted to know.

"Nothing, Sophie; you've done nothing," I tried to explain—"only, things are—hem!—different. I wear shell rims now and don't go to vaudeville any more. My editor won't let me."

"That must worry you a lot!" laughed Sophie Tucker. "I've been trying to get hold of you for weeks, to take you out to Edelweiss on a Wednesday Bohemian night and show you all the actors and—and my new stuff. You know, I've reformed."

"No!"

"Honest to God! I don't shout any more. I'm all class now. You wouldn't believe it's me, the subtle way I put a song over."

"Sophie," says I, "this is terrible. When can we get together and talk it over—for the paper?"

"Right now," says Sophie, kidnaping me, hooking her magnificent right in mine, cramming me into the crowded elevator and shooting me up seven flights to her hospitable pair of rooms in the Sherman.

There were birds, fruits, flowers, music, a piano, bottles, photographs and a bed in Sophie's frontmost room—everything you could imagine but a book. Sophie took the big chair and I took the bed. She rocked in the rocker while she talked, and sometimes I rocked on the springs.

"No, sir," she said—for emphasis more than for respect—"there's no more rough stuff for me. I've canned it. It's out—forever. I'm so damned refined now you wouldn't know me."

"This is terrible!" I repeated inadequately.

"Oh, I know you used to laugh your head off in the days when I shouted. You used to say you liked me best when I taught the trombone its place and made the electric lights flicker. But I've got something better for you now. I've got Art. I've got——

"Hel-lo darling. Come right in. There—that's for you."

And Sophie gave her own padded chair and a kiss to a rival dramatic critic, who had entered unannounced.

"I'm just telling him," said Sophie to my rival, "that he wouldn't know my act any more."

"He wouldn't know your 'Floradora' number," said this other critic, who knows everything. "I'll have to show you the business of that song, Sophie, especially the business with the hat."

"I'll be glad to get it," said Sophie. "I study all the time I ain't working. He wouldn't believe the time I put in on a song to get it just right.—Ashton, it's a fact, by the time I put on a song it's a classic. My

whole act is classic, a series of classics—because I change my act all the time. That's the reason I can play eleven weeks big time solid in Chicago at the Majestic and Palace and State-Lake—because I give 'em new stuff all the time. But, oh God! the hours of study it takes. Sometimes my brains just itch.

"But it's worth it, to get what you want and do it like an artist," Sophie vowed with lighted face. "I've just picked," she went on, "and remade a new one with marvelous story and lyrics. It's called 'The Soda Water Blues,' and if it doesn't give you the grandest, gloomiest laugh you ever had I'll buy you a new car. All my five boys dress up for it as bartenders, and I get stewed on vanilla and chocolate. That's something I've never done before!"

"I tell Sophie," said my rival, rocking easily where Sophie had rocked, "that she's the ballad-monger of the streetwalker and the drab. No lady of the underworld could hear Sophie sing a heart song without shedding tears."

In the laughter which this evoked, the distinguished dramatic critic for a great newspaper (for two cents) disappeared into Sophie's other chamber, ostensibly to telephone, but really, I fancied, to give me a chance alone with Sophie.

"I wish you wouldn't go, darling," said Sophie; then to me (she didn't darling me): "Ashton, do you know I'm making more money than any woman in this business today?"

"No! How much?"

"I wouldn't give you the figures on account of the income tax. But for God's sake don't put that in! They'll be on my tail."

"I'll say you said it laughingly."

"'Said Miss Tucker laughingly!' All right," laughed Sophie. "They read those darn fool things you write. You wouldn't believe it, the way folks read some of your things. Remember that interview you wrote with me as a singing waitress? They used it in my last divorce. But where am I? Oh, yes, money. They wouldn't give me all this money if I didn't deliver; if I didn't have the class, the finish, the subtlety. I'd never got it if I'd stuck to the rough stuff; I'd never got anywhere or anything."

"Sophie, are those pearls real?"

She unclasped the necklace and placed it in my hand.

"Heft 'em!" answered Sophie.

They weighed true. Sophie's other gauds spoke for themselves. Her bracelet was of diamonds, likewise her watch, and her rings held single gleaming stones whose surfaces were smaller than a quarter but greater than a dime, and there was a wicked winking one as big as a policeman's button which heaved at her breast.

"You ought to build a theater," I said, by way of relieving the strain.

"I'm going to," said Sophie. "That's what I'm going to do with some of my money. I'm going to build right here in Chicago the Sophie Tucker Theater and the Sophie Tucker Hotel and the Sophie Tucker Restaurant. Why not? I'm an institution here now. My name is the best kind of a draw. There aren't three greater money-getters in the world than a theater, a hotel and a restaurant, and I'll be there with all three. And believe me, boy, I'll get the first-class trade."

"Society?"

"Sure, Society. I don't meet nothing else, hardly, out at Edelweiss Gardens, where I'm hostess and every-

thing. And it isn't any 'Good evening, Miss Tucker,' either—it's 'Hello, Sophie, old dear.' And I don't mind telling an old friend like you that it isn't everybody could hold that job out there. It requires a lot of brains and a lot of common sense and—don't forget this—tact."

"Do you dance with 'em, Sophie?"

"I should say!"

"How do the Society johns dance?"

"Marvelously. They're the kind! They make me forget my married life and divorces. They treated me like—like the Queen of Sheba. You never saw such popularity. And proposals! I never knew there were so many proposals."

"Of marriage?"

"Whatdoyoumean 'of marriage'? Of course they're of marriage. You know what they call me now in this town?"

"Theda Bara?"

"Hell, no! They call me The Blizzard—I've swept the town so."

"But you couldn't dance a little bit in the old days," I was reminding Sophie when my kissed competitor joined us.

"You weighed a ton," said this rival critic without malice.

"I know; I couldn't lift a leg when I was at the La Salle in 'Louisiana Lou.' But you ought to see me now, Ashton. I can dance anything that's danced in two shoes. I frame some of my own steps."

"Write your own songs?"

"Well—I reconstruct everything I touch. I get wonderful ideas, and reconstruct to fit myself. It was hard at first. It took brains. But it's natural with me



now. It's going to tickle you to death to see how classical and how *personal* I've made my work."

"Whatdoyoumean personal?"

"Me—myself—Sophie Tucker. I put myself into the words, into the story, of every song I sing. I dramatize myself. I'm my own heroine."

"Life is incomplete till you've heard Sophie sing 'I Used to Love You,'" observed the rival drama critic.

"Everybody that hears me sing it thinks it's my own divorce I'm singing about," said Sophie—"I make it that personal. Listen" (and she slowly hymned, lifting a nourished shoulder to the rhythm):

*"I used to love you, but it's all over now,  
You've got it all over town  
That you threw me down—  
But you shouldn't let that kind of story go roun'."*

A pair of critics employed their unaccustomed hands to applaud. One of them told Sophie she was a marvel. Another that she ought to be in the movies.

"I may try that, too," said the undaunted Sophie. "I've had a letter from Fox, asking me to make a test picture."

"With lions?" I asked.

"Whatdoyoumean with lions!" exploded Sophie. "But"—she seemed to reflect—"why not? What's a lion or two to a woman who's had my husbands—eh, old darling?" And again Sophie Tucker bestowed a kiss upon my rival—the incomparable Amy Leslie of *The Chicago Daily News*.



## Goodwin and Daly— Mostly Daly



OW the merry party is complete!" Nat Goodwin groaned when I crowded into his dressing room at Cohan's.

"Just in time for the last words of a once brilliant comedian," said Arnold Daly, who was telling the doctor wherein his associate ailed.

"I told him," Mr. Daly told Dr. Martin, "not to eat that chicken a la King."

"It was chicken a la Kaiser—we got it at a German restaurant," Mr. Goodwin corrected.

"I wish, Doctor, you'd throw a scare into him as big as a torpedo," said Mr. Daly. "I'm losing my control over him. Every time he's hungry he thinks he's got a right to eat. He's the most undisciplined, unself-controlled——"

"Aren't you gentlemen speaking to each other?" said I; and told them of the time I "took" an extensive interview with Wilson Mizner and Paul Armstrong without knowing, until a week later, that those amiable dramatists were not on speaking terms.

"Armstrong was always not speaking to somebody," said Mr. Daly. "I remember a first night of one of his plays when he forgot to make a speech. George Cohan said: 'Armstrong's not speaking to the audience to-night.' But Nat and I are on as good terms as are possible between a—hem!—frugal young man and an old one who won't curb his appetite."

"Daly is the oldest youngest actor on the American stage. And he loves to be interviewed. Wind him up and listen to him rave."

Of course I laughed when Mr. Goodwin said that; and Mr. Daly made some impertinent remark concerning interviewers: like press agents, they always get the actor to do their work for them. He held me by the shoulders while Mr. Goodwin toddled to the stage for a momentary appearance in "Why Marry?" and he beseeched me to read Thomas Burke's just-published book of London Chinatown stories, "Limehouse Nights."

"Burke is an Irishman," said the other one, "who writes in language that stains your brain. All modern literary men of consequence are Irish. Even the Russians try to be Irish. I'd rather talk literature than politics; I know more about them than I do of the stage—I'll leave it to your friend Smith of the *Chicago Express*." This last witheringly.

Of course I haven't any friend Smith and Chicago hasn't any *Express*. But even at the peril of slightly misquoting Mr. Daly I am not here to have my friend and colleague publicly pickled in the brine of Mr. Daly's wrath.

"Your friend Smith of the *Express*," Mr. Daly went on, "is peevish because I do many unconventional things. If I had used the methods in vogue on the American and English stage for the last hundred years, and discounted for the last fifty years in France, Spain, Italy, even Germany, he would not have found me unconventional. I fancy he obtained his ideas of art in Peoria."

"Doctor," commented Mr. Goodwin from the door,

"you'd better do something for Mr. Daly; he seems to need you more than I do. He's very weak to-day."

"Twenty-two years ago, in this City of Chicago," Mr. Daly continued with magnificent disdain, "Frank Mayo appeared in 'Pudd'nhead Wilson,' using the continental method of acting. As he was at least fifty years ahead of his time he was not considered a good actor—except by members of his own profession."

"He's dead now, Arnold. What's the point?"

"I'm coming to it, you overfed voluptuary!—Thus I argue that for finite criticism on any art one must appeal to a member of his own profession. In music a musician is the only judge; in sculpture, a sculptor; in acting, the actor. Adequately to criticize acting, the critic must love the theater, despite the terrific boredom of bad plays and performances inflicted on him and the terrific dreariness he endures—just as the actor, adequately to act, must love the theater despite its disappointments and heartaches for himself. Now, speaking of music—you can ask me what I think of music."

"He'll furnish his own questions, too. He's no piker," quoth Mr. Goodwin.

"And I shall answer you as follows," Mr. Daly went on serenely. "Music at best is primeval instinct; every savage possesses it. I don't mind the common adoration of music; I like to get drunk on it myself once in a while. But when a people mistakes music, especially opera, for culture, I am bored to extinction. Why, eighty-five per cent of the bejeweled attendance at opera only go to gape at one another. Remember that, will you? I'll be back in a minute." And Mr. Daly stalked stageward.

"I've heard so much art talked this engagement," said Mr. Goodwin, smiling through his cramp, "that I wonder what my mission has been for forty years. But Daly is a very intelligent actor—to beginners; he makes everything so difficult."

"This," said Daly, rejoining us and leaving "Why Marry?" years and miles behind him, "this is a day of oriental imagination in which garishness is mistaken for elegance. And even if the music were pleasant and soothing, the opera-goers would not understand it unless it made their feet tap. Like the savage, they must hop to sound."

"The same queer people make up the bulk of our playgoers; and a play of any vital thought or real humor will die a-borning at their feet. The mob never has risen mentally above the circus and the pink lemonade."

"This," Mr. Goodwin cut in, "is not a Goodwin-Daly duet; it's an Arnold Daly solo. I don't want to sound violent, but I feel I must say that the play or the actor that assumes to be better than its audience is a damned fool."

Mr. Daly appeared not to hear. Mr. Daly ran on: "That was why Shakespeare wrote 'Midsummer Night's Dream.' He insulted the public and Queen Bess—the old fish!—had they but known it. When he played *Macbeth* before her she went to sleep."

"Arnold was there," said Mr. Goodwin in a melancholy aside.

"He was there mentally. Shakespeare wrote 'Hamlet'; and this time the old girl groaned with boredom. 'God!' cried Will, 'I give these people up!' And he wrote 'As You Like It,' and retired to Stratford a broken-hearted man."

"What's the moral, Arnold?"

"The moral, Nat, of all that I have said is this: Time may change, but boneheads never. And as for my unconventional acting, I may say what I have already intimated—I use a continental method."

"Mine is South Fifth avenue," said Mr. Goodwin, beckoning his physician, to whom he whispered brokenly, "Quick, Doc, the needle!"





## Miss Moores and Her Mamma

OME DAY, when I know that one of these beautiful young actresses that I go out to interview, is going to have her mamma present, I'll take my mamma along. And won't that be nice? While the beautiful young actress and I talk they can play together.

But how is one to know? You would say from the broad-minded drama in which Miss Clara Moores appears at Powers', you would say from casual inspection of "Lilies of the Field" that its leading lady could, on a special occasion, dispense with a duenna. . . . Well, perhaps it's me—I. True, my life is an open page, but who knows what fond mothers read between the lines!

Anyway, I had the best suit ironed and the hair bobbed, and went to the Congress to call on Miss Moores; and there was Mrs. Moores. And there stayed Mrs. Moores. She was young, handsome, and, I should say, dressed from Paris—meaning Mrs. Moores. It goes without comment that Miss Moores was young, was lovely, was exquisitely draped—that is her congenial occupation.

And Mrs. Moores, always the anxious parent, asked me if I thought the Chicago authorities would lay the hand of the law on "Lilies of the Field."

"No hope!" I remember saying. And we—that is to say Mrs. Moores and I—talked of "Ladies' Night" and other plays that have interested constables.

But this sort of duologue could not go on forever. I could hear myself, in the office, saying, "I regret to report, Mr. Hearst, that I have no interview with the beauteous Clara Moores, but I offer you in its place seven pages of authentic chatter with Miss Moores' mamma on the subject of bath-house drama." That would never do.

So, not without some violence, I forced myself on Miss Moores. "What's happened," I said, "to make you give such an amazing good performance? Have you fallen in love, or did something fall on your head, or what was it?"

And the beautiful girl not only talked, she laughed.

"I haven't fallen in love," she said, with an assuring glance for mamma, "and nothing's happened to my head. I guess it's just the part. And the funny part of that is that once I rather looked down on the part, and wondered that Marie Doro—they insisted it needed a star—would play it."

"You're certainly another girl in 'Lilies of the Field,'" I avowed. "You made me shed tears and laughter, too."

"Then it was you!" exclaimed Mrs. Moores. "Somebody came back and said Percy Hammond was down in the front row crying. I knew it couldn't be!"

"No; Mr. Hammond now does all his crying in New York."

"I think it was lovely of you to feel that way about my performance," said Miss Moores. "I got so sick of the other parts—they lasted so long. I was two years in 'Bunker Bean,' two years with William Hodge in 'A Cure for Curables' and two years with 'Shavings'—my smile got petrified. No wonder Amy

Leslie said it was as wooden as any of the toys *Jed Winslow* carved in 'Shavings'! I got so that I prayed for a series of failures."

"She actually did pray for failures," bore out mamma. "She felt she needed the experience."

"They usually come without praying," said I.

"Well, I got one," said Miss Moores, not without pride. In 'Pot Luck' I played an old maid who had to advertise for a man, being as they're so hard to get!—and, womanlike, fell in love with him and kept him. And 'Pot Luck' was a failure despite some wonderful publicity."

Now, there are three words in the English language that I roundly abhor—victuals, vex and publicity; and worst of all I hate publicity. Yet I could not resist asking Miss Moores what "Pot Luck's" wonderful publicity had consisted of.

"Well, you know our leading man, James Rennie, had just married Dorothy Gish. And it was plotted that one night I should faint at the end of the second act and that Dorothy Gish should jump in and finish out my performance. And I fainted—it was a scene where I fell into his arms, anyway—and she did."

"She read from the script?"

"She did not; she had it letter perfect." Miss Moores' mamma answered for her. "But do you think, Clara," she warned, "that we had better discuss the secrets of publicity for publication!"

"She was supposed," said Miss Moores, "to have been sitting out in front so often, to see her husband, that the part just stuck to her memory—that was the publicity. But it didn't help business any, and I was able to tell the author that I guessed I drew about as well as Dorothy Gish. Oh, yes; do smoke your pipe."

"I know your tobacco—it's Benson and Hedges' and smells like apples."

"Miss Moores, you don't mean to say that you  
——"

Mamma cut me off with—well, I won't say with a glare; there was too much amiability in her mute repudiation. And Miss Moores went on to explain:

"Mr. Hodge always smoked a pipe and that kind of tobacco; on and off the stage. He used to carry a pipe in his upper vest pocket. You could smell him coming. Oh, not that I mind the odor! But it did seem extravagant when one night he complained because I had had garlic sausage with my dinner; and I determined to get even. I conspired with his Japanese valet and got a couple of slices of garlic sausage placed in his vest pocket where his pipe ought to have been. But you couldn't rock Mr. Hodge with an earthquake. He calmly ate the sausage, and breathed heavily on me in our love scene."

"My dear," said mamma, feelingly, "I don't think you should tell these intimate things."

"I know they're just what Mr. Stevens likes, and you know how long I've longed to have him write an interview with me. I'm going to tell him about the squab and William Courtenay."

"My dear! You can't!"

"Can't I? You know, Mr. Stevens, I'd always had the most romantic ideas about William Courtenay; when I was a child he was my stage hero, and he kept on being my stage hero. Well, Mr. Hodge knew that I sort of secretly worshiped William Courtenay, and I don't think he liked the idea, being a rather widely worshiped person himself."

"Women just make fools of themselves over Mr. Hodge," sighed Mrs. Moores.

"So one night when mother and I were dining with Mr. Hodge at a table right near Mr. Courtenay's, Mr. Hodge began behaving in the strangest manner. We were eating squabs; and Mr. Hodge would take the small bones from his squab and put them behind his ears, like lead pencils."

"My dear child! What if Mr. Hodge should see this terrible story in print!"

"I don't care if he does! He did stick the bones of that squab behind his ears. He did more. He picked up the whole bird and rubbed his chin with it."

"Don't *listen* to her, Mr. Stevens!"

"And then he said, 'I'll make Mr. William Courtenay think it's fine company you keep!'"

"My God!" said mamma.

"Yes, it's nice to have your mother with you," Miss Moores was saying as I left. "When you feel sad and depressed, it's nice to have her take you in her arms and tuck you in your bed. I'm still a baby—big, but still a baby—and I don't know what I'd do without her."

And when I went home that night to get tucked in, I said: "It's always the same. I go into a mothered interview cursing the mother, and I come out blessing her and wondering what I should have done for a story without her."

"Oh, there are much worse things than mothers," said mine.





## Mr. Warfield Declines a Million



HAVE you come to ask me when I am going to play *Shylock*?" said Mr. Warfield, and said it with a twinkle. "Not this season; not this week, anyway," I told him. "The line I just saw in front of Powers' Theater seemed to indicate that the public still prefers you in 'The Music Master.'"

"The artist is the slave of his public—not his public the slave of the artist," said Mr. Warfield, still with a twinkle. His humor-loving eyes were framed in rims of tortoise, his heavy gray hair brushed back from the Beethoven forehead. But he did not wear a velvet coat, nor house shoes—his feet were shod in substantial leather and he was coated like any man of the world. There was nothing "staged" about Mr. Warfield in his sunny furnished room for solitary gentlemen at the La Salle.

"With the continued co-operation of the public," he went on, "I ought one of these days to be able to give a satisfactory performance of *Von Barwig* in 'The Music Master.' When I was a boy it was common knowledge that none of the great players ever achieved greatness in a rôle until he had played it thousands of times. Booth lamented the fact that he never got out of *Hamlet* all that's in the part; and Salvini said the same of his *Othello*.

"You know, I was pretty close to them when I

was a boy," says Warfield, with a tortoise-rimmed twinkle.

And, just between you and me, he would rather talk of the yesterday when he was a First Usher than of the now when he is a First Actor. But you and I have had him before in that fond and ancient rôle.

"Now," he said, "if I were to announce that next month, say, I would appear as *Othello*, it would create a little stir, possibly, among the theatrical writers. And the public would stay away from Powers Theater in great flocks."

"The box office invariably tells an actor what he shall and shall not play?" I asked—not too ironically.

"Invariably," Mr. Warfield answered. "The public is the real manager of an actor, just as the public is the real editor of a newspaper. It's folly, not to mention presumption, for an editor or an actor to pretend to be better than his 'circulation.' If men like me acted only what *they* wanted to have acted, and men like you printed only what *they* wanted to see in print, we'd have to have Fortunatus' magic purse to keep open a theater and get out a paper. It's our business—and it ought to be our art and pleasure—to give the public what it wants.

"Oh, I know you hate that phrase—'what the public wants'! But who remembers even the names of the brilliant, art-arty publications that failed because they didn't interest the public, or the actors that were too good for the regular, everyday drama of their day? Duse was the greatest actor of her day—bar none. And when she gave up drama for D'Annunzio what happened? She made the most

sensational disappearance from public view of which the world has record."

"You admit yourself to be roped and tied by that line at the box office?" I sadly queried.

"I do, cheerfully," he cheerfully replied. "And I am not this season talking *Othello*, or even *Shylock*. It's you writers that are always nagging an actor on to play something 'big,' something by which he can be 'measured.' In this, old man, you yourself have been a great offender.

"I played *Vanderdecken* for men like you," he went on, the memory saddening him. "And it was a very expensive performance—for Belasco and me. We piffled a whole season away, and I worked my darned head off to get back the cost of the production."

"You've quit educating the public at your own expense? Is that it?"

"My dear boy, it can't be done. The very idea presupposes yourself as superior to the public, in both taste and purse. It would be snobbish, not to say vulgar. An actor doesn't *tell* the public, he *submits* his work. What the public doesn't want it won't pay for; it is only by the public's grace that an actor acts—never forget that."

"I have been accused of playing 'The Music Master' for the money there is in it," he was saying.

"Really?"

"Really. And the accusation is true. Even an actor must be recompensed. But I can convince you in five minutes that there's another reason for my playing *Von Barwig* than the money."

"Here are your five minutes."

"I love the old play and I love the old part—I love to play it," he said very simply. "And it's a fine feeling to love something the public loves, too. I loved *Vanderdecken*, especially the 'prayer' in the second act—but I was awfully lonesome in my love—as lonesome as I would be in pictures."

"Ah!"

"Yes; and that's how I'm going to convince you that the money isn't everything. Can you keep a secret?"

"Not to-day."

"Then I'll not mention the sum I have been offered for one year in moving pictures. But I'll tell you that I declined \$300,000 to appear in a single picture at my own convenience."

"Why?" faintly.

"Because I'd rather be an actor than his photograph."

"When I laugh on the stage," Warfield went on earnestly, "I'm not laughing—the audience is."

"When I cry on the stage, I'm not crying—the audience is."

"The audience is my confederate, my brother actor, my *effect*. That's my business, my art, if you want to call it that. And I won't go to the screen because I can't take my audience with me."

"How much more profitable would a year of pictures be?" I asked him.

*"I have been offered—I have refused—a lump sum for a year in pictures that is greater than I could make in twenty successful seasons on the stage."*

The italics are mine. Mr. Warfield uttered the words quietly. I don't think he likes the subject.

"But think," I said, "what a man of your artistic

tastes—apart from the theater—could do with that year's money!"

"I could buy some wonderful paintings," he admitted. "I wouldn't have to travel and live in hotels away from home, life, wife, everything that's dear and decent. For that matter, I could now—without the movie million—stop acting and live in idle comfort—so long as I didn't buy works of art. But here I am, working as hard as ever I worked, and in an old play, because I simply can't let go. Can you answer that?"

I couldn't.

"Let me try to answer it," he said. "When I was an usher boy in San Francisco I went on the stage because I was stage-struck—and I was hissed out of my own town. But I was still stage-struck. And I guess I still am. Probably that's the reason I'd rather be an actor than his photograph."





## The Girl from Colosimo's



IF YOU can stand the world's loudest pipe organ," I tell Miss Dale Winter at the door, "I can find a corner for talk and supper in here."

"I used to be used to loud music," she answers—without merriment, without bitterness; and now I know that she will speak, and let me speak, of those yestertimes before "Jim" Colosimo was slain in his South Side cabaret, where she was queen of the afternight.

"There's no dancing——"

"I shan't find fault with that," she smiles.

"That's true—you didn't used to——"

"No," she says, simply; "Mr. Colosimo wouldn't ask me to dance with his patrons. I hardly ever danced . . . and so I had a lot—I still have a lot—of dancing to learn for my part in 'Irene.' I knew—or know—as little of dancing as I knew—or know—of acting."

"It's wonderful what you've done with that part," comes plomping out of me, still enraptured with her first formal first night in the town of her adoption, her development, her tragedy, and now her little triumph.

"It was much more wonderful what Mr. Montgomery did," the girl begins—and is ruthlessly interrupted by her interlocutor.

"Don't," I cry, "make yourself sound like a trained Belasco actress, saying you owe everything to your author-manager! I know that Jimmie's a genius; so does he. But I want to get *you* in this story and not my friend James Montgomery."

"There wouldn't have been much of me if it hadn't been for Mr. Montgomery," she whimsically persists. "I was nobody—you know just how much of a nobody I was—when a friend took me to him in New York. And I shall never believe that it was anything but the great kindness of his heart that induced Mr. Montgomery to give me and teach me his *Irene*. He knew my story—my experience—everything. And he no more than I was looking for the sort of publicity that might have been—and was not—had. It pleased him to regard me as an unknown, untried seeker for a little place on the stage who might do something with a chance. He gave me the chance, and he worked over me—how he worked!—that I might make the most of it. Eight days after he gave me the part I played it—on a Thursday and Friday, in New York.

"Oh, don't think that I'm trying to tell you that I played it well!" she pleads, and her frank brown eyes under the turban of widow's black echo the note of sincerity. "How could I have been anything but terrible with my inexperience and only eight days? I've still got a thousand thousand things to learn—but then there was no figure could number them. I was terrible. But Mr. Montgomery gave me the courage—and the chance—to go and make myself less terrible. And I've tried, really tried; I've lived nothing since last September but work."

"It's all a play, too," says I.

"Yes," she grasps, "there *is* a bit of drama in it."

"'The Girl from Colosimo's,'" says I, giving it a title.

"Of course, the strangest, the most unbelievable part, is that she should be *Irene O'Dare* of 'Irene.'" And without pause she adds:

"I don't think my five long years out there were wasted, do you?"

I answer an emphatic "no" even as memory shuffles its cards and I see her again in the atmosphere that was Colosimo's. It is four in the morning and some of the dancers reel. Hoarse women, the paint on their mouths awry, laugh like oboes; when they speak it is to say "I'll say it is," or "Say, dearie." Red-faced young men and purplish, fat-faced older men talk their secrets above the moan of the lustful saxophone. Everybody drinks with everybody else. Only the waiters appear detached, each man for himself; but one oath too loud, one gesture that might become a blow, and these piratical minions are an organized constabulary for peace at any price. Their seldom employed bum's rush is as pretty as football and faster. . . . A stout girl with jellying neck, an employe, sits at your table and drones a "blues" above the din; clairvoyantly the distant band blares an accompaniment. Over the way at a table where amber wine sparkles in high glasses sits a girl of arresting frank-faced beauty who but for two things might be a slummer from the north coast—she wears no hat and she is not interested. She is Dale Winter, "Jim" Colosimo's girl. And even the wastrel optimism of the place, which holds every woman guilty till proven innocent, sets her apart, implacably straight to "Jim," a dark, groomed, nourished man who drifts from

group to group and shines in the smoke-screened night like an opal. . . . She is not interested, but she is acutely interesting. She has more than beauty; there is intelligence in her level brown eyes, intelligence and candor and something flamingly clean. And it is this clean spirit of Dale Winter's, outspoken in her free, square gaze, that attracts you more than does her lovely voice; which night by night, if the truth be told, is becoming less lovely in the unnatural battle to make itself heard above the thunder of the souses. Herself has not hardened in this hard place; but her voice? . . . You wonder, curiously enough, if Fate figured that it was saving a voice in that grim hour when Colosimo paid his last toll to vendetta.

"No, Miss Winter," I answered, "your five years 'out there' weren't wasted. But I think six would have killed your singing."

"So do I," she agrees. "Nature is just nature and we can stand just so much."

"But I want to ask you—you had in your kidhood one season with a road company in 'Madame Sherry'—which was the harder, the one-night stands or—?"

"Nothing," she interrupts, "nothing can be compared to those years out there. Do you realize I was there from five in the afternoon till six in the morning? And I never drank. My brain was always clear. And I had—I was just a girl, like any other girl—I had ideals. You know at its best what a place that was for a girl's ideals!"

"You had no antidote?"

"Well, I had work. I got up at twelve—I can fortunately do on very little sleep—and studied. I studied piano, harmony, Italian. I learned Italian, not only to sing but to hear. It helped out my curi-

osity; I could understand what the Italians said about me—unless they spoke in dialect; and they did when they wanted to put something over.”

“I suppose that many a benevolent American gentleman offered you inducements to leave the place?”

“I was educated,” she ironically smiles, “by everybody in Chicago. That’s what they offered me to go away, rather than jewels—education. It was my fatal instinct to betray interest when an intelligent book was named. Oh, you don’t know,” her irony goes on, “how marvelous it was to some men to run across a girl out there who had read a book!”

“Where was this proffered education to have been obtained?”

“I have been seven thousand times around the world,” she lightly laughs.

“The Mr. Cooks were generous!”

“Yes; and every Mr. Cook would assure me—‘Now, my dear, there are positively no strings on my offer; I’ll put aside so much for your education fund.’ And he would warn me, as my friend, that there were terrible, hideous strings on the offers of the other Mr. Cooks. . . . Night after night of that. Sometimes I used to wish that O. Henry could have seen and heard what I saw and heard out there when I sat into the dawn, sober, observing, thinking . . . thinking.”

“I don’t see how you stood it!”

“Oh—I always had—as a last resort”—she muses slowly—“my sense of humor.”

“How does it feel to come back to Chicago and succeed as you succeeded to-night? How does it



feel to be *The Girl from Colosimo's* grown into *Irene of the Studebaker*? Does success thrill?" I seek to know with a gush of, perhaps, gushing questions.

"I should be afraid of a thrill of that kind; I'd suspect myself. I know, Mr. Montgomery knows, you know, lots of people know, how much I've got to learn before I can be anything like a real success on the stage. I think it's only the self-deceiving people that lack the right humility in their work who thrill up and gloat 'What a great fellow am I!' Some people perish of applause—especially when they themselves lead it. It's the 'best seller' that's ruined more good novelists than anything else."

"But there must have been some pleasurable reaction to your performance to-night?"

"I'll tell you," she leans over the table and says: "I had one of my old jolts to-night as I hurried out of the theater, away from the sweet clean merriment and romance and melody of 'Irene.' For the tiniest fraction of an instant it seemed that now I must rush back out there to the old place, and sing any that were called for of the thousand terrible tuneless, grammarless ballads which I used to know so well, so pitifully well. That was always my jolt after a night at the opera, after in imagination I had been one with *Mimi* or *Cio-Cio-San* or *Santuzza*: back to those abysmal ditties. And to-night I felt the old jolt for an instant—and then it was good to realize that it was only memory playing a trick on me."

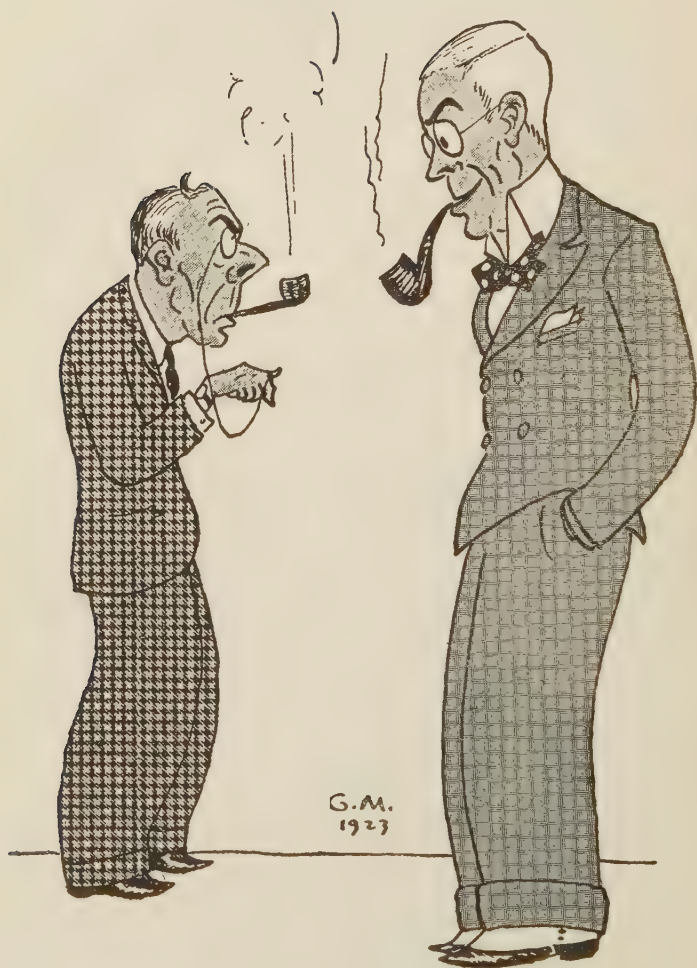
"You will go out to Colosimo's some night?"

"Oh, yes, I'll go—some night. See that man over there?—the one with the bald head and the young girl. He seems to look like, he seems to typify, the old place. Oh, the thousands of him I've seen!" She laughs; real laughter; her eyes laugh, too.



"The years out there weren't wasted if they taught you how to laugh," says I.

"There's laughter and laughter," the Widow Colosimo philosophizes. "If I had learned to laugh unkindly the corners of my mouth would be turned down now."



## Mr. Arliss Speaks of Mr. Archer



THE George Arliss who thrills and chills you with his murderous *Rajah* of *Ruhk* in "The Green Goddess," is, I need hardly tell the children, a somewhat different gentleman in his sunny, windowed chamber at the Edgewater Beach Hotel. Here, without straining the imagination, you might take him for an English schoolmaster with a dozen capital letters after his name. Here, without giving the organ of speech too large an order, you might address him as Professor Arliss.

Anyway, you can't imagine yourself bouncing into the room and slapping him on the back and crying, "Hello, George!" And as for, "Hello, Georgie!"—I don't think George Arliss' own father would dare.

Not that I wanted to! Bless you, I've known him only twenty years. And he was ever thus—an angular man of great deliberation and great dignity and burnished address, who is saved from pomposity by a gentleman's modesty and a sense of humor which is all the finer for being somewhat shy.

But speaking of his deliberation—and we were speaking of it, he and I—I remember he told me he took positively no chances with the unprepared on a first night; which declaration I interpreted to include his curtain speeches, which are the smoothest and roundest and most literate I have ever heard over the fire of the footlights. And, I hasten to assure the

reader, it is with trepidation that I begin to punctuate this report with inverted commas; for I am no stenographer, my more or less trained memory has its limitations, and my small gifts for composition could not hope to make me write as Oxfordly as Pr—as Mr. Arliss talks.

“Nothing could induce me to wear a clean collar on a first night,” he was amazingly saying—for no man’s linen looks purer than Arliss’. “On a first night I take no chances on anything,” he went on, explaining. “The shirt, the studs, even the collar I wear must have been rehearsed.

“If the collar balked at being buttoned”—I am not positive that he said balked, but that was the sense and it will serve—“I might be thrown into a state of disastrous nervousness. On a first night a faulty buttonhole is enough to unsettle one’s nerves. My man, who has been with me twenty years, knows that it would be more than his life is worth to give me fresh linen for an opening.”

But we had not met to talk about his buttonholes, nor did we do so in more than passing.

I had said, in a notice of his new play at the Great Northern, that it doesn’t seem within the possibilities for Mr. Arliss to give a richer characterization until he acts *Iago*, adding (in a year in which everybody is doing or threatening to do Shakespeare), “And why shouldn’t he act *Iago*?”

And now I said: “Have you ever tried *Iago*?”

“No; in fact, I’ve never played Shakespeare,” was the astonishing answer of an actor whose suggested background would imply many a bout with the Bard. “Somehow I always just missed Shakespeare.” And then we spoke of Warfield and his *Shylock*, and I told

Arliss with what humility and hard work Warfield approached the part.

"I can understand that," he said. "If I ever played Shakespeare it would be with the fear of God in my heart, the fear of making an awful hash of it." And he went on to say that an actor's actual performance frequently was not his original conception of the part; because an actor's performance was restricted by his physical appearance.

"*Iago*, I always feel," he said, "should have brawn and muscle. I see *Iago* as quite a pleasant kind of villain—a big soldier, rather charming to look at, and not trying to be too damned subtle. But when an actor tries to make himself physically different from the way Nature molded him he's losing the most valuable thing he brings to the stage—himself. No thin man," he epitomized, "can play a fat part convincingly."

"Did you ever see Tree's *Falstaff*?"

"Entirely unconvincing," said Arliss, shaking his head from side to side more in criticism than sorrow. "He was a very lean man when I saw his *Falstaff*, and I could always, as with the aid of an X-ray, see the thin Tree through the fat stomach."

We talked of Tree in happier parts than *Falstaff* . . . and of Mrs. Patrick Campbell (with whom Arliss first came to these not inhospitable shores) in wittier rôles than that of autobiographer.

Her comment on Max Beerbohm's thicker-than-water family-story biography of Sir Herbert Beerbohm Tree, "Why didn't they call it 'Our Father Which Art in Heaven'?" he recited with delicious brevity. And in the fewest possible words he narrated her answer to George Alexander's request that his incorrigible colleague please refrain from laughing at

him on the stage: "I never laugh at you on the stage; I always wait till I get home."

"She could not resist uttering a witticism when it flashed to her lips," said Arliss, ever her admirer, "but she was never unkind in her heart; she would be witty only to be sorry when her jests were spread about."

And I told Arliss of a day long ago, when, crossing the bay from Oakland to San Francisco, Mrs. Campbell's press agent, poor devil, had pointed out a rocky peril to navigation and told her it was called Goat Island. To which she had replied, "Ah, your birthplace." A minute later, I told Arliss, she was implanting the prettiest flower in her corsage in the press agent's buttonhole.

"The words and the deed," said he, "are irresistibly like her."

George Arliss, I found, talks of himself but frugally. In what he tells he is habitually the witness, the innocent spectator bystanding spinsterly.

And his best talk, for me, was about the author of his very fine melodrama; about William Archer, that permanently sane dramatic critic who first brought Ibsen into English and eventually made us like it if only in Ibsenic dilution, and then wrote a book on play-making, and finally, in the sixty-fifth year of his age, followed the book and made it good with the best drama of adventure since "Secret Service." Listen to this Archer story. I think it is a perfect thing, if I do not make too much of a hash of the perfect words in which Arliss told it.

"William Archer," said he, "is the most retiring man I know; and he looks it. He is a formal man, too. He is never without a dark suit, a bowler hat and an



umbrella. Well, I had asked him to visit me at a little cottage I've got near Dover. 'Don't bring dress clothes,' I cautioned him—'I'm almost the oldest inhabitant, and I've never seen any here.'

"Archer and I were walking across country to the bay, talking about the national theater which he would like to see established in England and which I'd like to see over here; Archer wearing his black suit and his bowler hat and carrying his inevitable umbrella, although it was as fair an August day as could be. It was, in fact, the August bank holiday, and crowds were down. But the waves were very high and nobody was bathing. That is to say, there were no swimmers out but a couple of idiots.

"I remarked what asses they were as Archer and I went on talking about our national theaters. Then I noticed that one of the asses was in what looked like serious trouble; he couldn't get through the waves to the shore.

"I rushed to a nearby shed—a sort of life-saving station. But the hour was noon, and evidently nobody was allowed to drown during the lunch hour, for the shed was deserted and I couldn't find as much as a piece of rope. I discovered, however, a pole, of the kind used for shrimping, and with this I turned to the water. And there I saw that somebody had gone to the rescue and was bringing out the poor idiot, all but drowned.

"I turned and looked for my companion, but could see him nowhere. 'He's most likely with that little crowd giving first-aid to the idiot,' I said to myself, and walked to the little crowd—from which Archer emerged just then, looking for something on the ground.

"His dark suit was perfectly buttoned, and at first

I didn't notice that it was wet, because being wet all over it didn't look wet at all. He said, quite calmly, I say, have you by any chance seen my umbrella?"

"I told him not to mind the umbrella, that what he needed was a whiskey and a change. I said I couldn't fit him with a suit, but to come along and I'd give him some dry underthings. 'I've got another suit with me, but I must find my umbrella—it may come on to rain,' said my dripping friend. And then, finding it, he immediately picked up where we'd left off talking national theater: 'You were saying, Arliss, about that plan of yours——?'"

"It's a classic!" I cried.

"There's just a bit more," said Arliss, his perfect manners absorbing the graceless if well-meant interruption. "While Archer was in his room, changing, a party of visiting Americans, hearing that I had a cottage in the neighborhood, motored over to have a look. We were exchanging a few words in the living room when one of the visitors, taking out his watch, said, 'Why, it's one-thirty, and must be your luncheon hour; we'll be going.'

"And at that instant William Archer entered the room—in complete evening dress. He was such a modest hero that I didn't keep them to explain. And he wasn't a strong swimmer, either, I found out, but not afraid of the waves, he told me, from much bathing in Norway. No; I didn't explain Archer's wonderful midday costume, and I've often wondered what my American visitors thought."

"A wonderful story, Mr. Arliss, of a wonderfully cool man. I wonder if anything could heat him?"

"I saw him heated, as you say, once. You know how exceedingly clever Winthrop Ames is at lighting a stage. He will spend hours and days perfecting a

single effect. At the last but one of the dress rehearsals of 'The Green Goddess' he was dissatisfied with the lights and said he would rehearse them separately next morning. I went down to the theater to watch. And while we were there Archer telephoned to Ames, whose secretary answered and said:

"'Mr. Ames and Mr. Arliss are at the theater, relighting the last act.'

"And"—Arliss chuckled noiselessly—"and Archer misunderstood the word relighting. He thought we were doing something else to his play and came down very, as you say, heated."



## My Favorite Leading Lady



PUT a white carnation in my button hole and with some misgivings went over to Mr. Cohan's Grand Opera House to call on my favorite leading lady.

"She admires you," Harry Ridings had told me to my blushing face. "And not alone for what you've written about her. Ha! ha! she saw you in a box one night and—well, frankly, old man, she likes your looks. Better wear the pearl gray derby!"

But of course I didn't go that far. But I'll own now that I wished mightily that it had been a brighter day so I could have worn the new straw. There is always something jaunty, not to say youthful, about a straw.

However—the carnation was crisp, the shoes newly browned, the trousers nattily ironed, the hair freshly trimmed and looking, I hoped, not too pearly grayish, and nobody but the stage fireman would know the gloves had been cleaned. I looked my best and wanted to when Mr. Caldwell—Mr. Caldwell B. Caldwell himself—took me back stage during the matinee of "A Prince There Was" to meet my favorite of all the leading ladies.

"Even at the risk of betraying a secret," he was telling me on the way, "I think you ought to be informed that this young lady is tremendously interested in you. Only last night she was asking Grant Mitchell if you had a car. Her mother said——"

"She has a mother!"

"Yes, the kind you'll love."

"Mr. Caldwell, I promised my own sainted mother that never again would I write an interview that had a stage mother in it. The Mrs. Janises of the drama and I don't harmonize."

"I respect your emotions, Mr. Stevens. Let me go ahead and get this lady away. I promise you there'll be no chaperon."

Mr. Caldwell kept his word and light-heartedly I went to my fate.

"That's your chair," she said, denoting the other one by her dressing table. She gave its white lawn covering a little pat. That made it very comfortable, I told her—wasn't I the rogue?

"It's been waiting for you ever since the night you smiled from the box and I smiled back . . . ever so long. But it knew you'd come." She turned full spell ahead the allure of two wide, gray-blue eyes.

"I fear you're a flirt," I told her faintly.

"Is this flirting?" Her lids were lowered. "I thought it was just being happy and natural. Mr. Caldwell told me I could be that way with you. What kind of a critic was it he said you are? Now I remember!—very human. He said you were very human. Are you?"

"Awfully," I said—"but don't tell anybody how human."

"I won't. Then we'll have a secret. And I won't even tell that we have a secret. So that'll make two. Aren't we getting on? But I knew I'd like you!"

"How'd you know?"



"Oh, first I knew from what you wrote. But I knew better from the way you looked. I said to mamma: 'Hold me tight—that man has a way of looking right into my heart.' Then Grant Mitchell told me that you had smoked a cigar in his dressing room and told him that of all the leading ladies you'd ever seen I was—I was the most lovable. Why did you tell him that?"

"Because it was true."

"But think of all the leading ladies you've seen! You must have loved some of them. Honest, now?"

"Um—I loved their work . . . some; yes."

"You don't mean you don't like my work! Tell me where to make it better and I'll try."

"No! I love it."

"Why do you love it, Mr. Critic-Man?"

"Because it's just you yourself and nobody else."

"I'm glad I'm me," my favorite leading lady whispered, and caught up my hand and for an instant held it hard.

"How many times have you been in love?" I was asking her.

"Lots. My mother says I'm a different girl when there's a man around. But I guess all girls are. . . . I had an awful crush on George M. Cohan. He had a way of looking into my heart, too. And he was so generous. Once he gave me twenty dollars."

"What!"

"Oh, another time he gave me fifty dollars, all in gold. 'Maybe you can get yourself a little wrist watch with it,' he said."

"Didn't your mother——?"

"She doesn't like me to accept money from men. She said she wouldn't let me go to Robert Hilliard's

house any more if he was going to give me ten dollars every time."

"Do all your sweethearts give you gold?"

"Mr. Mitchell never did. One time he gave me some beautiful peach blossoms with lovely delicate petals. They were the sweetest gift any man ever gave me."

"Then a fellow doesn't have to be rich to make you happy?"

"Dear, no! Chauncey Olcott never gave me anything while I was playing with him—not until afterwards—and I loved him best of all. It isn't gifts that make love."

"What is it that makes love?"

"I think I could answer that better if—would you?—if you let me sit on your knee."

Nothing could have made me say no.

She sat on my knee and whispered in my ear:

"Now I'll tell you what makes love. It's a hug like this." Her arms were round my neck. "And a kiss." Her lips impulsively crushed mine.

And don't think I resisted! I hugged back and kissed back—and then ran to write it down. Which can be done because my favorite leading lady, Marie Vernon, was eight on her last birthday.

## Mr. Jolson Acts Up for His Bride



TOLD her I was a panic," laughed Al Jolson.

It is not the opening night of "Bombo," but it is another big night at the Apollo for Mr. Jolson. Mrs. Jolson, the new one, Miss Ethel Delmar that was, Miss Delmar that danced so Spanishly in George White's "Scandals" last year, is out in front. She has just come to town and is taking her first glimpse of her husband's second-year production, the most ambitious of his career.

And the world's greatest singing comedian is tuned a semitone above concert pitch and riding on his nerves. He is best that way. Calm Jolson and you clam him. When he's right, as the ring men say, there's a touch of hysteria.

There's a palpable touch now; a singing quality in his talking, lots of white to his soot-circled eye, and a handshake so hot it stings me.

I sit in his dressing room to look and to listen, feeling that there will be little need to question here.

"I told my wife I was a panic—over the long-distance. 'I sang tonight like Titta Ruffo,' I told her, 'and the jokes rolled out of me like money from a mint.' 'Yes,' she kidded me back. 'I suppose there isn't another show in Chicago.' Then I rang up Jake Shubert, in New York. 'There must be something the matter,' I said; 'they *like* us; not only me, but your

*show.*' Then, still talking to New York, I got the receipts on White's 'Scandals'—not so good. That show can play to twenty-five thousand a week and make only sixteen hundred; which gives me only about a dollar sixty for my share. Wouldn't I like to have 'Bombo' guaranteed twenty-five hundred a week for the next nine years!—even though we'll go close to forty thousand this week."

"Since when have you had a share in the 'Scandals?' "

"Since I said I'd guarantee the salary of Paul Whiteman's band; I thought it would be just as cheap to own a piece of the show," he grins. "Besides, everybody was panning White—you know how arrogant he can be. You ought to hear him tell his actors how to 'inflect' this word, and 'deflect' that one, and how to give a 'richer reading' to a line. When I tried to tell him one of his 'readings' was all wrong, he said, 'Al, what do you know? You've been with the Shuberts all these years.' So I just naturally had to back him to the extent of—well, anyhow, I made a dollar sixty last week."

"Don't ever leave the Shuberts or you'll be lost for a joke," I warn him.

"They'd be losing a pretty good joke, too. But you should have seen me at the out-of-town tryout, getting ready for the Chicago opening. We'd been closed six weeks, and I had to go out and get shoes for the girls! There wasn't a Shubert to help me within fifteen hundred miles. But when the tryout was over I could wire my wife that Pewterville thought we were great. She wired back: 'Pewterville's the place where they think the Kentucky Derby's a hat.' "

"I'd like to meet that lady!"

"You will. She'll be back here after the show.

She's smart. She ain't so damned smart, though," he adds, as one who could temper praise with justice. "She thought she was a clever actress. Ha!"

With that he goes stageward, leaping. And I am left alone with him that knows Jolson closer than a brother; with Frank Holmes, who has dressed him ever since Jolson has been able to afford a dresser.

"How long have you been together?" I ask Frank, a great artist in his line, whose hair has grown grey for two.

"Twelve years. We started together in the first Winter Garden show, before he was a star. I was in the chorus and dressing Melville Ellis; and Ellis says, 'Don't bother about me this opening night; I've got only a dress suit to put on; go and see what you can do for Jolson.' And I went and never came back.

"'You stay in here and dress here and dress me,' said Jolson. 'I've always paid a boy five dollars a week'—he never overlooks a business bet, Mr. Jolson don't—'but you're a good boy and I'm going to give you ten.'

"That was twelve years ago, when I started to dress him. Now I do everything—the letters, the bills, the photographs, take care of the money, everything. I prepare the checks, I prepare everything—he just signs where I tell him. And I see that everything's paid on the first of the month whether he likes it or not. I don't think he owes five hundred dollars; which is remarkable for a man who makes almost half a million a year, counting royalties and everything. And I keep his nerves down. Every first night I tell him the old team's bound to win; and it does."

The other half of the team comes back somewhat let down. They are still applauding him out in front



of the stage, but Mrs. Jolson's bridegroom is not satisfied with himself.

"My humor's gone," he moans. "They knocked down a scene and my jokes went with it. And then that girl—you know, Frank—just as I was going on, stopped me to know if she was going to get that ten dollar raise. I can't think of jokes when I'm reminded of money. You know, I'm no Will Rogers; jokes don't come to me one a minute. Say, did you see what the critic of the *New York Times* said about Frank Tinney being funnier to him than Wynn, Errol, Cantor, Stone, Rogers and Jolson all put together? I wanted to answer that. Oh, it was all right for me. But not for Rogers. He's the wittiest man in the world."

Without a word concerning them, without a look at them, Jolson signs some eight or ten checks which the faithful Frank has been filling out. "I'll bet my wife says I'm rotten tonight," he sighs as he signs.—"Hello, Gimpey!" he cries with returning life, addressing a youth in the door, whose rakish slant suggests race tracks, faro banks, song publishment, politics and case goods. And to my great delight I am privileged to shake the hand of Colonel Gimp.

"My favorite gunman," says Jolson, confidentially. "If there's anybody you want bumped off, he's a friend as is a friend.—Did you see the missus out in front, Colonel? Yes, looking fine—daring me to make good. She's got two regular seats, paid for plus Couthoui and everything.—Say, Frank, don't forget to telephone tonight to Mrs. Jolson in San Francisco.—That's Mrs. Jolson number one. She writes to Frank.—Be sure you tell her I say not to sell the place. And those deer heads—tell her to keep 'em.—Trophies of some shooting I did in Mendocino.—And you find out if there's anything she needs; and she can have it—any-



thing.—Great theater, this Apollo Theater. Beautiful. Ever see the Jolson Theater in New York? Big as a stable and you have to have a team of Eskimo dogs to find it. A fellow bought two seats for it at Tyson's, and returned them and wanted his money back; said he couldn't get in; said they threw him out on his ear. They cross-examined him and discovered he'd tried to get into a secret convention at Carnegie Hall. Now I'm going back on that stage and give an imitation of a comedian trying to make his wife laugh."

"He'll work his head off with her out there," grieves Frank. "You know, deep down in his heart, he'd rather be an opera singer than the greatest comedian in the world. He's music-mad. And can't read a note of it, not a note. And composes, too. He said to me at Palm Beach, 'Here, Frank, you remember this tune while I go in swimming'; and he sang it to me. I drew five lines on my cuff and put down dots; and when we got back to town one of his scorers wrote it out right."

Frank throws a wig onto his own head, climbs into a pair of turkey red pants, and goes right on: "Now I'll stop writing checks and counting money and do some acting myself. I haven't got a real part in this show; just a bit where I carry on the bucket and he kicks me off—those big spouting parts are too much for me. Be back soon."

The Colonel comes in from his post by the dressing room door, and I am rapidly learning to love him when Frank returns, breathless, saying:

"Thirty seconds and my performance is over. Just long enough to be on the Shubert pay roll. He likes to have me on the stage, if only for a minute. On or off, I absorb a lot of his nervousness. I always tell

him what's the matter when something goes wrong on the stage. I always tell him something. When there's a crash I tell him it was a rope broke. You can't argue with a rope. But a lot of those people in the company don't understand my work; they think I'm his spy and don't trust me. They ought to realize that the fewer tales I tell him the easier it is for me all round. I'd do anything to keep him from worrying. I wouldn't dress anybody but Jolson, nobody else that lives. I wouldn't have to. I'd go home to Hohokus, N. J., and be a big fellow. I've got a farm there, and sometimes the mayor consults me on important business questions. Here he is."

Meaning not the mayor of Hohokus, but Mr. Jolson of "Bombo." And he is laughing.

"It's funny they should laugh at that!" Jolson laughs.

"At what, Al?"

"At me saying, when they asked what I was doing aboard Columbus' boat—at me saying I was a compass-reader. It just came to me. And how they laughed! Even my wife laughed. Is there such a thing as a compass-reader?"

"Maybe not, but it is funny."

"Funny where the funny things come from, isn't it? Now, my wife says funny things—too damn funny, sometimes. When I wired her that I was having a hard time keeping off the heiresses at Palm Beach, she wired back that it wasn't any too easy side-stepping the millionaires in Pittsburgh. But thank God she's no longer an actress! 'You've no right to be on the stage, with your ideas!' I told her. I'd just bought her two new dresses—oh, the very best—and what does she do but meet two girls she knew and give 'em to 'em."

"But the girls were poor," softly upspeaks Colonel Gimp; "they didn't have anything."

"I know!" cries Jolson's high tenor. "But I know a place where I could have bought 'em dresses for twelve dollars."

The performance of "Bombo" is over; we can hear the song-sellers peddling on the pavement above. Jolson, washed white, dresses briskly against the arrival of Mrs. Jolson and her verdict.

"Is she ever going back on the stage?"

"Not if I can help it," he vows.

"How'd you get her to leave it?"

"The booking offices agreed with me. She was out with a Kipling act, playing *Mogli*, the elephant's friend. She was getting twelve hundred fifty for the act and paying out thirteen hundred fifty. She had high-priced animal actors out of the 'Follies' jumping around and listening to her say, 'Do you love meh?' I sneaked into one of Proctor's houses and saw the act without her knowing it. She did a fall that day—and lit on her head. And I laughed. And she heard about that laugh. *Sssh!* For God's sake!—Come in, sweet woman!"

She comes, and, believe him, she is sweet! A dark, sweet girl in a dark gown, and gloriously unpainted. Twinkling dark eyes I see, and a twinkling mouth—with gum in it.

"Put it out!" from Jolson.

"It's one of the few pleasures I have left," sighs his wife.

"Well?" from Jolson.

"Yes, I'm quite well," from his wife.

"Well, how was it? Did you like me?"

"Yes but you work awfully hard," says she with-

out a comma. "I don't see how you're going to keep it up."

"Is that all you got to say? It's a hot night; that's why I'm all perspiration."

"Baby, you work too hard! You'll kill yourself! You need a team or something in there toward the last, to rest you."

"Colonel, you know that girl we saw dance in the cabaret? See her to-night and tell her I'll give her a hundred a week to fill a spot in the last act. If the Shubérts won't stand for it I'll pay her out of my pocket.—That settles that, Ethel. And now, apart from the hard work, how was I? Eh?"

"First—answer me one question."

"Shoot!"

"Where," she ironically laughs, "did you get all the beautiful chorus girls?"

"You devil!"

"Apart from that, Albert, you were great."

And I go away telling myself that it is easier for an actor to be a hero to his valet than to his wife.

## Melting the Ice With Miss Lynne Fontanne



AURETTE TAYLOR started this.

Now, I have known Miss Laurette Taylor since she was a tender child in wild western melodrama—since she was very young and even I was youngish.

And the other week, when she and I and the other man—J. Hartley Manners, the one she married—sat at dinner between all-star performances of Mr. Manners' "Out There," Miss Taylor regaled him with a tale of our youth. Thus:

"I was very poor then, Hartley. I had only one new hat. I had it on. I was in a cab with a prematurely gray-haired dramatic critic, who had been dining beyond his means. At any rate, he was wondrously illuminated.

"And you can imagine my horror, Hartley, when presently he held—I shall tell the whole truth, no matter what the cost!—held and squeezed my hand.

"I should have leaped from the cab and thrown myself upon the protection of a gendarme. . . . But I could not, Hartley. Think what you will, but I could not. For it was raining dogs and cats and I had on my only new hat."

When Mr. Manners had done laughing, his wife said that, now that my gray hair is no longer prema-

ture and I have ceased to dine beyond my means, I must, positively *must*, know her bosom friend and associate actress, Miss Lynn Fontanne, who would soon be coming along to the Studebaker Theater in "A Pair of Petticoats."

"You will love each other," she said with an enthusiasm that sounded almost prophetic. "But you mustn't—— But of course, you wouldn't squeeze a girl's hand now—at your time of life!"

Cyril Harcourt, who wrote the delectable petticoat comedy, took me to Miss Fontanne, cursing Britishly the unsweetness of the alley that led to the stage door. It was a devil of a path, said he, for gentlemen of breed and learning—what?

Again he cursed the muck of the alley. "I'm no bloomin' Verlaine," he said, quickly following it with, "Of course, you're not!—Not quick enough then, Stevens; I had to say it for you!"

He introduced me to Norman Trevor, who shares his dressing room and is so much like Trevor's acting that I shall never be able to tell you where the mime leaves off and the man begins.

Mr. Harcourt was for organizing a select and patriotic party to go out to the park and smear the yellow paint of disesteem all over a certain statue there that has the tactless untimeliness to be German. But just then we ran into Miss Fontanne, who had barely time to ask me to tea on the morrow—and as these words are written the German statue still stands unstained, although I don't fancy Lloyds' is writing any insurance on its complexion.

But this is a long way round to Miss Fontanne, who was in her living room at the Stratford next day,



surrounded by several thousand books—shelves on shelves, from carpet to ceiling.

"Yours, Miss Fontanne?"

"Dear, no! A journalist had these rooms before Miss Hanaford and I took them. What curious things you American journalists read."

I examined, and the first title that struck my eye was "Ask Mamma."

"That ought to be helpful," I blithered brightly. Her cool brown eyes were searching me for I knew not what; her well-drawn nose and chin were held a bit high; she was as crisp as lettuce ought to be, this trig, smart, lean, little English girl.

"How about the one next to it, 'Why Be Fat?'"

I looked. It was really there. Such a silly book for such an unfat lady! It was most ridiculous. We laughed together and the ice was cracked—some of it.

"English, aren't you?" Miss Fontanne smiled.

Was she spoofing me?

"No; Californian."

"Oh. Perhaps it's your clothes," she considered.

"What's the matter with them? Don't they fit?"

"Not too well. Most American clothes fit a bit too well to—er—be quite casual, don't you think?"

Was she spoofing? "Gee, those English!" I thought with the American in Harcourt's comedy of charming bad manners—where Lynn Fontanne plays so charmingly at being a cat.

"Miss Fontanne," I said, "I may not look it, but I'm terribly shy."

"Really?" I thought her eyes softened.

"Really."

"Well, then, I don't mind telling you that so am I. I'm so shy that sometimes it just hurts. And this

was one of the times. That's why I began to interview you . . . in self-defense . . . understand?"

Of course I did. More ice was cracked.

"It was my shyness and hers," she told me, "that brought Laurette Taylor and me together. She was the rage in London. Everybody was invited this day—even me. But of course I wasn't to be introduced . . . only the great were, my hostess said.

"But when I saw Laurette sitting there terrified—there's no other word—I forgot my own terror in sympathy. I sat down by her and said wasn't it hideous being terrified in a crowd? And she said wasn't it? . . . and brightened directly I told her I was an actress, too, of a sort . . . she'd thought I was just 'society.' She asked what I'd done, and I told her I'd played the part of many ages in 'Milestones,' and played in 'My Lady's Dress,' and she'd seen both plays and—well, then and there she asked me to come to America and play with her. She thought I'd be useful in repertory. Of course, I didn't know she really meant it—then.

"Do you know her?" she asked me suddenly.

"I've met Miss Taylor," I answered, within the truth.

"Did you find her very shy?"

"Yes; quite—I might say *very* shy."

"You're not the American journalist who?—But answer me this: Were you ever in a cab with her?"

"Once."

"Now I know you!"

What little ice was left had melted.

"Write here," she said, indicating the top of a page of my "copy" paper; "write here and we'll make it a joint letter."

I took the pen and wrote:

"Dear Laurette Taylor: Behold your protegee, Miss Lynn Fontanne, in the degrading act of being interviewed by the man who tried to hold your hand in a cab one rainy night when you preferred your hat——"

"Stop there!" Miss Fontanne commanded. "Laurette registers—no need to rub it in."

She took the pen and added these words to the letter:

"But have no fear, dearest. We are not in a cab—and it is not raining."

She gave me back the pen and bade me continue. I wrote:

"Her performance in the Harcourt comedy is really wonderful. But what I meant to say is this. I'm free—for the time—and I wonder what she'd say if I asked her out to dinner?"

Miss Fontanne took the pen and quickly composed:

"And I'm free—for the time—and very hungry, for I missed my lunch. And we could walk—if it doesn't rain. Yes? What?"

"Sign it!" she ordered.

"You first."

"Always yours, darling—Lynn," she put down.

"Yours respectfully, ditto—A. S." I subscribed—and telegraphed the collaboration to Miss Taylor's abode in New York.

The evening papers came up. The forecast was for light showers.

Yes, and we had an interview, too. Not a very large interview, to be sure, not a very formal one, for I think we forgot—most of the time—that we were working. She said that her interview would be about

as big as Lady Tree's "Autobiography," which she proceeded to recite at full length:

*"This is the life of little me:  
I am the wife of Beerbohm Tree."*

And I remarked her choppy, brittle English, and she remarked our sloppy, "r"-ful American.

"I say over the telephone, 'Please give me the clerk,' and the operator says, 'You mean the clerk.' I ask her to send up a vawse for flowers, and she says I mean a vace."

And she told me of a new play in which she may appear, if she doesn't come to Chicago with Miss Taylor in her original rôle in "Out There." It is a new play that she thinks she would suit if the author will only consent to change a line which remarks the fatal beauty of the heroine.

"We couldn't keep that in," she said, quite calmly.

"Why not? Aren't you—pardon my professional bluntness—a very good-looking girl?"

"Not very."

"You don't mean to say——?"

"No, no—not that I'm homely. I am," she said, quizzically, "rather picturesque, in a gauche and angular way. With lots of trouble, with infinite care in the choice of clothes, I contrive to look smart."

She looked impeccantly smart to the undiscerning eye of the male, with soft lace at the neck and cuffs of her severe one-piece tailor suit, which was English tailoring, no doubt, but English tailoring that fitted painlessly, which is to say that it neither hiked nor humped.

But who am I to tell you what a stunning girl has on? I only know that she was stunning—and that she likes American humor. No! I'm not flattering myself.

It was the humor of an American actor, whose name I lost in the enjoyment of the yarn.

She had filled a brief idle term with the traditional adventure in vaudeville. "And," said she, "I thought that American humor surely was a superstition when I rehearsed this sketch, in which I had to say to my brother, who was about to demean himself by marrying a hard-working stenographer much too good for him: 'Look at the portraits of your ancestors! Think of the honor of your family!'

"We rehearsed without scenery, and in the excitement of the opening I did not look at the setting until I came to the fatal line. The actor who played my brother looked up with me. And what we saw, where the ancestral portraits should have been, were pictures of the Lord's Supper and Christ turning the money-changers out of the temple. As I said, 'Look at the portraits of your ancestors,' he said, under his breath, 'Evidently a Jewish family.' "

Enter on our laughter bellman bearing telegram—two telegrams, in fact.

"Yours first. Read aloud what she said to you," Miss Fontanne demanded and aloud I read:

" 'Dual letter received. Lynn talks best on the subject of me. Use that as basis of interview. Give her my love, and tell her to remember all the nice things I told her about myself. Yours very truly—Laurette! ' "

"I don't think I'll let you see mine," she said, "it's so terribly intimate."

But she did; and it wasn't—not so terribly. It ran:

"So, my dear child, your career has led you to a twosome with A. S. No matter how you play, when you leave the interview you will find him the winner. Do

right and fear no man; be dumb and fear no interviewer. With my love always—Laurette.”

“Still hungry, Miss Fontanne?”

“Um—yes—if it isn’t going to rain.”

“I’ll call a cab.”

“No. Wait downstairs till I put on my hat. Oh! And would you mind sending a telegram for me? I’ll write it now.”

She did, and folded it, and I took it down. And of course no perfect gentleman would look at a telegram that was not addressed to himself. But how was an imperfect gentleman to know there were twenty words unless he looked? Besides, as you see, it wasn’t so terribly intimate:

“I’m enormously hungry, and I don’t care if it does rain—and I’ve got lots of hats. Yours desperately, darling—Lynn.”

And everything went delightfully till we arrived at the theater at eight-ten that night, when Mr. Harcourt addressed me as “the lightning interviewer.” A witty man, Cyril Harcourt and, I hope, not a jealous one.

However . . . Laurette Taylor started this. And Western Union can testify that she also finished it.



## “Hitchy”



WE DROVE sixty-five miles with Mr. Hitchcock at the wheel. It didn't seem that long. He talked most of the way, but it didn't seem that long.

There were times when I thought it was going to be much shorter. There were times when North Shore policemen challenged Mr. Hitchcock's interpretation of a lawful speed; there were times when danger posts, curb-stones, light poles and other habitually stationary objects forsook their sites and dodged menacingly in front of Mr. Hitchcock's front wheels.

Raymond Hitchcock is a great musicomedian, a magnificent manager—so magnificent that he is \$80,000 to the bad and can't make a cent out of a “Hitchy-Koo” that is nightly straining the capacity of the Colonial Theater—and indubitably he is the best long-distance talker that ever tooled a touring car.

But he is the world's worst driver. And I think he knows it.

We had just dodged the jiggling Edgewater Beach Hotel and were skidding from under the prow of Northwestern University, which had floated into Mr. Hitchcock's right of way, when he slowed up to sixty miles to permit the safe crossing of a beautiful flaxen woman wearing a beautiful black crêpe hat. The tail of his artistic eye lingered on her hat.

"The Widow Stevens would look well in one of those for Easter," said he.

Hatless, his straw-colored hair inviting the fragrant breezes, he sniffed Nature welcomingly. Spring was good to "Hitchy," and he knew his Nature. He knew the budding trees and piping birds by name.

I don't think the center of his system is Broadway and Forty-second street. His apparel—morning coat, white waistcoat, saffron gloves, varnished boots with buttoned buff uppers, not to mention a gold watch the size of a swan's egg with melodramatic diamonds on both sides—does not proclaim the man within.

He was telling me now that you never can judge a man's pleasures by his poses.

"There was 'Diamond Jim' Brady, who left me this watch. In such jeweled junk he sewed up a million-and-a-half dollars. Most folks thought he was diamond-mad and chorus-girl-mad. He wanted 'em to think so. That was his pose. Diamonds and chorus girls were 'Diamond Jim's' bait for the railroad men he did business with. I know; I knew Brady as well as any man could. That stuff was his pose."

"What was his pleasure?"

"Business—selling goods—making money. He was the most consistent business man I ever met—and nobody knew it."

"What's your pose?"

"Being funny."

"What's your pleasure?"

"Being a manager."

Then he posed.

"There are four things for a man driving a car

to beware of," he said, drawlingly: "A woman driving a car, a boy on a bike, a hen, and a Ford."

"Have a cigar?"

"No thanks; don't smoke, don't drink. I swear" (I've never heard him), "flirt with the women and wear fancy vests, but I don't drink."

"Flirting, at our time of life, Ashton, in homeopathic flirts, is good for us. A mild flirtation keeps alive the sensation that, by gosh! you're not on the shelf yet."

"How's 'Hitchy-Koo' doing?"

"Fine! bully! about twenty thousand this week. The show's doing so well in Chicago I think I'll close it out in about two weeks more and go to London."

"! ! !"

"I'll close it out because it is the most expensive show in the world. It could make money in New York, but not here; the percentage is against me."

"And you added two thousand a week to the expense by adding Lillian Russell!"

"Well, I didn't want to slight Chicago," he apologized. "Grace La Rue and Rock and White were out of the cast and I thought I'd try to keep faith with a town that always has been pretty decent to me. Oh, I'm a far-seeing manager! Perhaps Chicago will let me come back. I always look ahead. I remember when I was a boy and——"

"You've told me before of your first job—selling shoes."

"That wasn't my first job," he corrected reproachfully. "My first job was cleaning bathtubs in a barber shop. If I had been a bright boy I might have been the head barber by this time."

"You've had some wonderful pasts," I said lightly.

"Yes," he answered with sudden seriousness, "I've had some wonderful pasts. And I'm not ashamed of any of them.

"I was fresh from jail," he went on, for the first time in our long acquaintanceship referring to those dark days in which he had an opportunity to check his list of friends. "Oh, I was fresh from jail. (What a boob I was—then!) And my lawyer advised me not to hang my head, but to go out among men.

"I went with him one night to a public banquet in New York. As I was about to seat myself, a man who had known me well said with a sneer:

"'I'm afraid you've made a mistake—this table is reserved for celebrities.'

"'I qualify for it perfectly,' I said to him—'I am both famous and notorious!'

"And sometime later, when this gentleman, cruel with wine, said, 'Mr. Hitchcock, didn't you use to clean bathtubs in a barber shop?' I answered:

"'Yes; but I don't recall ever preparing a bath for you.'"

We got out at a pharmacy and ate ice-cream soda and talked showmen.

"Billy Sunday and George Cohan are the greatest showmen in the world, and one of them is on the level," quoth Hitchy.

"Where'd you get the idea of hand-shaking your audience?"

"From Georgie Cohan. I sent him an emergency call to Atlantic City, and he came with his small self-esteem and large genius and knocked 'Hitchy-Koo' into shape. He told me to get right down in the aisle and talk to the audience by the hand. 'They'd hang anybody else, but you can get by with it,' says Georgie.

"And the first big mark to come sailing down the aisle was Ambassador Gerard.

"'Hello, Jim. How's your excellency?' I sang out, and gripped him; and the little old show was on and 'over'—thanks to Georgie."

"Did you make him a partner for that?"

"No! George isn't my partner—he's my friend. I couldn't do anything for him for that. I couldn't even pay his board bill at the hotel."

"Have you ever been broke?"

"What do you call this—being eighty thousand in the hole!"

"I mean actually broke."

"Yes. A month ago in New York I got up without a nickel in my pockets—without a nickel in the world. And I'd had a pretty good return from my Fulton Theater that week, too. 'Words and Music' had lost only twenty-three dollars. It was the best week the Fulton had had under my management.

"Well, as I say, not a nickel to my name that day. And there I was in my Packard limousine, with two men up—a driver and a whatyoumaycallem. And two honest sons of toil with lunch pails see me in my limousine and say right out so I can hear it:

"'Pretty soft for that guy!'

"That got me. I called 'em. 'Hey, you!' says I. 'Come here!' And I told 'em I didn't have a nickel, and had to feed those strong men on the front seat and keep them from worrying about anything in the world.

"'I envy you,' I says to the working fellows—'I envy you your wages, and your paid-for lunch in the pails, and the way you can look your wife in the eye when you go home—not to mention the corner grocer.'"

"It must be awful," said I, "when you are feeling particularly bright and spontaneous, to have some major creditor shown down the aisle right into your handshake."

"Get back in the car and I'll tell you about it," said Hitchy.

"But first I want to tell you about the nickelless morning. I was ashamed to touch anybody for ten or a hundred. So I drove to the bank and borrowed ten thousand. And when that was due, I borrowed fifteen thousand from a friend and paid off the bank and had five thousand to pay housekeeping accounts.

"As long as you've got your health and a job, you can borrow. That's the secret of my finances. I'm always healthy, and always working. And another secret is, always pay the little fellows. Now——"

"Was this a little fellow that walked down the aisle?"

"It was not. It was none less, nor other, than New York's distinguished money master, Jacob Wertheimer. I grabbed him warmly by the hand and said:

" 'How are you, Jake?—this is a pleasure. Ladies and gentlemen, I want to introduce you to my partner, Mr. Jacob Wertheimer. I owe him forty thousand dollars, and he's never going to get it, and that gives me the right to call him my partner.' "

"And Jake beamed, bless him! beamed all over himself—positively liked it. And during the intermission he came back to my dressing room and said:

" 'Say, Hitchy, how'd you like to make that eighty thousand?' "

"And you——"

"Not then—not *then*, Ashton! That would have



been inartistic. I told him I'd consider it. I told him I'd hold it open for him."

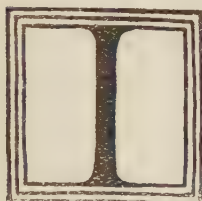
"Put him in suspense, as it were?"

"Yes, suspense, as it were. You have a happy gift for words. But I think I'll end Jake's suspense pretty soon and take his other forty thousand with me to London."

"With a little sense of humor," said Manager Hitchcock, dropping me at my door, "you can get away with murder."



## Twenty-Thousand Dollar Legs



HEAR that you," said Miss Fay Marbe, over our fruit cocktail at the Blackstone, "that you like to interview stars or beautiful women."

I laughed; her "or" made me. For Miss Marbe, patrons of the Apollo Theater will recall, is not the star of "The Hotel Mouse"—not by at least one Frances White and one Taylor Holmes.

And she is a beautiful woman—girl; dark of eye, of hair, with an ever-smiling full mouth of coral and ivory, vivid in a summer-bronzed face of magnificent oriental modeling, and with a form whose delectable sculpture not even the prevailing sweater can exaggerate.

I said, superfluously, "Which are you?"

She confessed her beauty by answering, "I'm not a star yet, but I shall be next time I come."

"You're not," I asked, in what approximated anxiety, "going to stay away till you lose your looks?"

"Oh, no," she replied scrupulously; "I shall have both."

"I like your confidence!" I smiled.

"And I like you," she rejoined—God knows why. "I've been hearing some lovely things about you."

"Swaps?" I conjectured.

"You call them that here, too! I didn't know the word had gone so far. Oh, not that Chicago," she quickly recovered, "isn't charming. It's my first visit

and I love it. I think Chicago's even more hospitable than New York—and I've seen a great deal of New York; the social side, you know: I used to entertain the Astors, the Harrimans, you know."

Curiosity impelled me to inquire as to how Miss Marbe had entertained the Harrimans and the Astors.

"I danced for them, at their homes; and I was Caruso's favorite protégée—I wish you could see the letters!" Her brown eyes rolled. "It was really through Society, you know, that I left a private finishing school for the stage. But perhaps you've heard?"

I regretted that I had been deaf.

"It was at the great Allied Pageant, where I led the Oriental section and danced. Billy Elliott saw me and said, 'Will you dance for me tomorrow afternoon at the Princess Theater?' And I said 'Yes,' without even knowing that 'Oh Boy!' was playing there—I knew nothing about the theaters. I'd hurt my foot, too; but just the same I was there next day and up on the Princess stage dancing for Billy Elliott.

"'I'll do the best I can,' I said, while I danced, 'but you'll have to make allowances for my sore toe.'

"'You can speak lines, too!' Billy Elliott cried at that. 'I've got a part for you!'

"'And then and there he gave me the part of *Polly Andrews*, the second lead, under Anna Wheaton, in 'Oh Boy!'—And I wasn't a bit frightened," declared the believable girl. "I went into that show as though I'd been born on the stage. True, I walked through a wrong door in an important scene, but I came out all right and smiling; and Anna Wheaton said, 'If I had your assurance I'd ask no odds of Bernhardt!'"

"No chorus, no heartbreak, no 'backer.' I just went on the stage and—here I am," murmured Miss

Marbe, pride beaming in her lovely lineaments. "I'll be twenty-one next February; I'm just twenty-and-a-half now; and I've worked continually. Did you know that I got twelve hundred and fifty for a week in New York at Marcus Loewe's State Theater?"

"I must have missed that in my careless reading. What did you do for twelve hundred and fifty?"

"My vaudeville act, fourteen minutes, with my pianist. And then I stood out on the canopy—it was really a dangerous place—and released toy balloons."

"All for twelve hundred and fifty?"

"Well, I suppose I should have got extra for that—but then, you see, the publicity, not to mention the distinction! I was the only star who ever stayed a whole week at the State. And that week we took in twenty-five hundred more than ever before or ever after in the history of the house—Mr. Loewe has so stated.—Did you see Griffith's 'Orphans of the Storm'?"

"Yes."

"Then don't you remember"—she removed her saffron sport hat and shook out her recently bobbed hair to the best of its length—"The Dancer?"

And you may be assured that I did not say, "Which dancer?" No, indeed, I said, "Oh, yes, The Dancer!" And I said it with a couple of capitals.

"I thought you'd remember, a man with your eye for—and even if you hadn't, there's a big painted poster now in front of the Roosevelt which says, 'Fay Marbe in Her Intoxicating Dance of the Carmagnole.' I may be induced to make a personal appearance there; I don't know.—Oh, tell me, what kind of a club is the Union League?"

"It's inclined to be Republican in its politics," I said, "but socially it's beyond reproach. Why?"

"Such a load of flowers came from there for me the other night, with a card that only said 'from an admirer.' I liked just those three words. They were so different from the usual name and address and 'will you sup with me tonight?' "

"Do they always put it that way?"

"Oh, of course not always. You needn't write this, but I don't mind telling you that since I've been in Chicago I've had six proposals from men I've never seen."

"Of marriage?"

"That's what I mean."

"Do you think they're serious proposals? Do you think the writers realize all they are pledging?" I unsmilingly inquired.

And unsmilingly she answered: "Oh, yes, they're perfectly serious and perfectly conscious of the responsibility. Why, one's from a young clerk who gets only twenty-five a week and frankly tells me so; but his plans and ambitions are on quite a different scale. And I rather admire him for his honesty and his decency; he's not a bit like the men who—you know—have very different ideas about a girl on the stage. Thank God, I've never had to have an 'angel'! What I am I owe only to myself—and to my mother, oh, to my mother most of all, for she gave up for my career Society friends, everything."

"Your mother's here with you?"

"Just outside in the lobby waiting for me," she answered literally.

Whereupon I felt that we must "work," as Mr. Loewe's actors say, "fast."

"You've mentioned 'backers' and 'angels,' Miss



Marbe; am I to infer that you have been much pursued by the avid millionaire?"

"Much, indeed! When I was the *Velvet Lady* in 'The Velvet Lady'——"

"Wasn't that," I blunderingly and all seriously interrupted, "a girl with a mask in a vaudeville 'mystery' act?"

"On the contrary," she replied, with a just indignation that shamed me for my ignorance of the Drama, "it was a very large and very beautiful musical comedy, produced by Mr. Erlanger. And as I say, when I was the *Velvet Lady* in 'The Velvet Lady,' a certain rich man, whose name is national, offered me my own moving picture corporation and my own theater—the 'Fay Marbe Theater.'" And if Miss Marbe's voice slightly gloated as she pronounced the imposing name of this edifice, I was to remember, to her eternal honor and virtue, that it never has been builded.

"What was this gentleman's argument?" human interest compelled me to quiz.

"Oh, for one thing," she languidly answered, "that I worked too hard when I worked for others—which I shouldn't do with my looks, with my spirit, with my skin, with my figure. As though I'm to blame for my figure!"

"God alone appears to be responsible," I solemnly said.

"But sometimes it's very trying; sometimes," she sighed, "I envy the plain women of my profession. An unattractive girl can go up to the top on her merit, and nobody will question that it has been on her merit. She has no beauty to tempt rich or influential men to tempt her, or to cause other actresses to be jealous of her and put obstacles in her way. There are times when I envy the plain actress. 'Angels' never bark up her tree."

"When did they begin to bark up yours?"

"The first night I appeared in 'Oh Boy' the 'angel' sent me so many flowers that three men had to carry them. And with the flowers came a necklace of pearls worth fifty thousand dollars—I didn't know their value; I didn't know anything about pearls," confessed Miss Marbe—whose taste even now would seem to prefer the ruby when it is red and square-cut and worn, on the right hand, in a dimension only slightly smaller than a postage stamp—"but mother told me. Of course, she sent the pearls back."

"Of course."

"But you can see what a nice little battle it's been, just to work my own way unaided by the men who look at you with moist eyes and say, 'What a marvelous skin!' 'What a marvelous figure!' 'What a marvelous hand!' You've noticed my hands?" she inquired, holding slightly out these exquisitely graduated members. "Harrison Fisher has painted them many times; he had them insured for ten thousand. Was it my hands that attracted you to me when you first saw me on the stage?"

"No," I answered with honesty—and I think with courage, too—"it was your legs. Lloyds' would scorn to underwrite them for a dollar less than twenty thousand."

"They've been rated even higher than that," she said without emotion, and asked me if I ever journeyed to New York. And when I said, "Sometimes," she said:

"Well, next time, come straight to me, at the Astor. I've got a marvelous car, and I'll take you marvelous places and give you a marvelous time. And I don't ask everybody, I'll tell you!"

## Sothern and Marlowe



Y friend Mr. Sothern will not take it amiss, I take it, if I say that of all the parts he plays he plays none so well as the one in which I found him the other afternoon at the Blackstone Hotel. He was being, perfectly, Julia Marlowe's husband.

Now, a perfect husband is rare enough even among the unsought and the undistinguished; but a perfect husband to a famous actress and himself a famous actor!—that is the stuff of which domestic dreams are made.

I had been bidden to join them in "tea" (the quantity of tea I consume in this profession is not, I sometimes regret, exaggerated); and Mr. Sothern himself now made it and poured it and lemoned it and abetted it with toast and trimmings. He was host and hostess, too.

They were going to another city before settling here for the engagement at the Studebaker, and Mr. Sothern was perfectly safeguarding Miss Marlowe from the needless wear and tear of travel—from tea and me, among other wears and tears. His wife, he told me—employing almost romantically, I thought, the homely word—his wife was in the adjoining room, "resting."

"Mrs. Sothern is not ill again?"—I had anxiously expressed it. And he was taking pains to attest the needlessness of my alarm.

"She never was better; the six years of retirement, 'disappearance,' have worked wonders for her; she has at last paid herself back with rest for those long years—how many? twenty-five or thirty?—of incessant work in the theater. An hour's calisthenics every morning before an open window—in a bathing suit! You wouldn't," he felicitously phrased it, "know her!" And I did not argue.

"Why have you and Miss Marlowe returned after having reaped such a thrilling farewell?" I asked, and added: "Only Kipling ever got such 'final' appreciations without going for good. And he did his best to."

"I know," said Sothern. "So did we—our very best. Nothing could have been more genuine than our disappearance. We not only renounced everything, we sold everything—every last stitch and stick of wardrobe and production. We had three auction sales—and the total was a beggarly six thousand dollars. For things that cost five or six hundred apiece the dealers or curio-hunters bid twenty or twenty-five dollars. The scenery we had to give away.

"But, even so," he pursued, "I thought we had enough to live on for the balance of our days, when—when along came war and peace and made our dollars worth fifty cents. See?"

"No," I said blindly, "I won't see it that way. It never has been money with you two—else you'd never have been Shakespeareans in the *first* place, let alone the *second*!"

"There was another consideration," he smilingly admitted. "I had already made my deliberate, calculated, prepared, but—always bear in mind—sincere 'farewell.' I had listened to the not unfriendly 'final' appreciations of the public and the critics. But my wife had not. She had been taken from the stage by

a complete and sudden breakdown. She had been cheated out of *her* wonderful opportunity of tasting the final sweets of public expression. And," this perfect husband perfectly wound up, "I was willing to go back to help, to round out, my wife's farewell. For, of course, you know we can't go on forever now—I'm sixty and—there you are!"

He did not say that this is the year when Julia Marlowe becomes fifty; nor did I say it. But the hideous historical fact was in my mind—that this most spirited and not the least beautiful of the immortally beautiful ladies of the drama was verging fifty! And in the lowness of my soul I wondered if this were not the highest testimonial to Mr. Sothorn's perfection as a spouse—this (I meanly thought) keeping her doored away from the searching, vulgar eye of the press lest, perchance, her appearance betray her half century as vividly as his did not betray his three score.

At any rate, I know one searching, vulgar eye of the press that presently would, if it could, have dimmed itself. That was when Mr. Sothorn, taking casual stock of his watch, observed the hour with a shock and cried, "Julia! Julia! We've only time for the train!"

I heard the door open to this. I heard her ever-young voice greeting me. But for an instant I had not the courage to look. Then I found myself shaking her gloved hand and gazing into her unpainted face with an expression of idiocy at least.

"How well you look! How marvelously *young* you look!" was all I could stammer.

Of course I am not the first man who has turned giddy at sight of Julia Marlowe. She has ways of restoring them to balance. She immediately began to



tell me how well *I* looked. As though idiocy became me!

Tactfully Mr. Sothern chatted the while. He had been talking so much we had lost sight of the time, he said. It never was safe to let a man talk about himself—he did *not* say about herself.

Even critics were nicely disposed in the tactful flow of Mr. Sothern's words—which are hard to quote because they were so effortless and yet so charmingly arrayed. Himself a delightful writer, he talks as a good writer would like to—talk: his ornaments sharpen the point and season the occasional humor. He was saying (I'll try to say for him):

"Critics are, we've come to know, the public—a concentrated public. In the end they are about right—in the end they represent the public. And we've got to take their blows in good faith, just as we take their caresses. But especially the blows. I come of an acting family, and I know that it's been ever so. I've seen my father come away from the newspapers—pummeled. But he always went back for more. It was his idea, I think, as I am certain that it's mine, that we actors are like prize fighters in that much depends on how much punishment we can take."

"Tell me, Sothern," I said, taking advantage of the flood tide of his good nature, "who has been your severest critic?"

Miss Marlowe laughed a silvery scale. No, it was more liquid—she fluted it. Mr. Sothern answered with perfect gravity:

"My fiercest, most merciless, critic is my wife—although she operates with the kindness of a surgeon. When I want to find out how bad I am she sits alone in the theater while I go out alone on the stage and show my interpretation to her. Then I hear her say



that my *Shylock*, say, is a mass of overacting, a medley of ill-remembered performances by others, a thing of shreds and patches. 'It isn't human,' she will tell me. 'Those lines are only coming out of *you*, an actor who has memorized them—they don't come out of *Shylock* at all!' "

"If," broke in Miss Marlowe, "you exaggerated your performance as you do my comment I'd have a chance to talk mercilessly!"

"How is he as a critic?" I asked her.

Again the perfect husband perfectly answered:

"I don't, fortunately, have to assume such an attitude with my wife, whose perceptions are much more acute, whose imagination is much quicker. I'm the slow coach of our little family—and perhaps my wisest talent is knowing it."

"Hasn't *anything* funny happened," I asked Miss Marlowe, "since you've 'come back'?"

"I wish to heaven it had!" she deplored, adding, "But we've had no luck!"



## Fanny and I and the Baby



HERE had been trouble in "The Follies." Miss Ray Dooley, impersonating an infant in arms, had carried realism too far, some of the pundits and Puritans said. My colleague Mr. Hammond, although himself a parent, had frowned on that lifelike scene wherein a male comedian suddenly withdraws his supporting knee from an unrestrained babe of imperfect lap-manners; and last week Mr. Ziegfeld had come rushing from New York to reassure himself that more nature than art had not leaked into his show.

"I shall not mention the sad affair to Fanny Brice," I said to myself on the way up to her rooms; nor did I even when I discovered that Miss Brice has an infant of her own.

It met me when I entered; it made straight for me. It made a gurgling sound.

"She's trying to treat you to a drink," the child's mother explained.

Hospitable just like mommuh, is Fanny Brice's sixteen-months-old daughter, Frances.

Big for her months and a mighty crawler on Hotel Sherman's carpet, the baby had made across the floor for me with her bottle. Now she deposited it on my lap, emitting an intoxicated "Blib-blib!"

So from the warm bottle I drank with and to Fanny's first-born.

"Frances," I said, "here's hoping your path to the stage is as rosy as your mother's was."

"Don't!" cried Fanny, and grabbed her child from me. "Don't wish what I got on *her*. It cost me thirty-five dollars cash and a million dollars' self-confidence to become an actress. You know what George M. Cohan said to me when I was rehearsing in the chorus of 'The Talk of New York' and he saw me dance? I was as tall as I am now and a hundred pounds lighter—mostly shins—and *clumsy*! Cohan takes one look at what I dance with, and says out of the corner of his mouth:

"'Back to the kitchen for you.'"

"Don't be ungrateful, Fanny; wasn't that what drove you into burlesque and got you discovered by Ziegfeld?"

"It was a boil back of the soubrette's ear that got me to Ziegfeld, and don't you ever forget that," Fanny corrected. "She was the stage manager's wife and I was her understudy, and when she grew this boil I said, 'God is good to me,' and got ready to go on in her place. And at the last minute she puts a big pink ribbon round her neck and goes on herself—with me waiting to drop the scenery on her. But it wouldn't stand the strain, the boil wouldn't. It exploded and had to have a doctor, and I went on and got six encores in a song where she'd been getting one; and Ziegfeld heard about me and I was signed for the 1910 'Follies.'"

"That," I told Fanny, "doesn't sound very hard, but rather soft."

"Baby," wailed Fanny, cuddling her youngster, "that ain't the half of what happened to your mommuh when she first went to be an actress on the stage."

"Blib-blub-blub," answered Frances, sympathetically.

"She says, 'Go on with your story,'" Fanny translated, and went:

"It was a newspaper advertisement that says the lady wanted new beginners for the stage, and with my mommuh I answered it. The lady was a Miss Rachel Lewis, little and Jewish and thirty; and she has for partner an actor by the name James O'Neill, but not the original. She says she will make me A Number One actress for two hundred dollars paid now in advance. But my mommuh is Jewish, too, and offers her thirty-five.

"For days and days," droned Fanny, "I go round to the bum hotel where Rachel Lewis lives, and see no actors, no lessons, no nothing. My mommuh is getting impatient, so one day I says, 'Why don't you teach me?' and Rachel Lewis she shows me a Spanish dance, and I take it home and show mommuh. She says, 'For thirty-five dollars only a Spanish dance!' and wants to know where my costumes are.

"So I went back and told Rachel Lewis and she said she'd measure me, and showed me a tape measure. She shows me a tape measure for two weeks, and that's all she shows me. She's busy rehearsing a crowd of queer-looking creatures who say they're actors, in a rented show which is called 'The Ballad Girl.' Rachel Lewis is the *Girl*, and I've got a part, too, but no costume yet.

"I get it," Fanny went on, warming, putting down the baby and pacing the long living room in trailing Japanese negligee. "I got the costume the night we open 'The Ballad Girl' in Hazelton, Pa. And it comes just to here." Fanny designated a place midway between waist and knee.

"I was so thin those days it was a shame to show



me the way that dress did. And the longer the show stayed out the thinner I got. They gave me a quarter a day for meals, but I had to split the quarter with the dog. He was Rachel Lewis' dog and roomed with me, the dog did—twenty-five cents a room for the two of us. It cost a dime a day to feed the dog, and I was getting so thin, eating on fifteen cents, that my bones were coming through the skin at my elbows.

"This isn't where you laugh! Lemme explain. I was working on my elbows in the water scene—where stage hands hold strips of cloth that were supposed to be waves. I played an alligator in that scene. You couldn't see *me*, but I was the alligator just the same. My right arm was one of his jaws and my left the other jaw, and I lay on my elbows in the trough of this water scene and worked the jaws of the alligator. And the joints of my elbows got so sore I used to cry.

"When I got courage enough to tell Rachel Lewis my elbows wouldn't stand the alligator part any longer, she patted me on the back and said: 'But what shall I do? There ain't nobody else in the whole company can play it so good as you.'

"I believed her. Poor fish! I kept on playing the alligator's jaws, and business got worse and worse. We were so rotten the little towns didn't want us even before they'd seen us. They'd heard about 'The Ballad Girl.'

"'There's only one thing left to do,' says James O'Neill—which I tell you again, wasn't the original James O'Neill—'and that's to give 'em drama.' So they got 'The Royal Slave,' which was sick with drama; and because I said I could sew they let me make all the costumes. But the only change I got for myself was a Spanish scarf out of Rachel Lewis' suitcase, which made me look like a piano lamp. And looking



like a lamp, I'm supposed to get married in the last act of 'The Royal Slave'!

" 'I've got to have some clothes to get married in,' I told Rachel Lewis. 'I've got to have anyway a veil.' "

" 'I tell you what,' says she—'you take the curtains off the window in your room at the hotel and you've got a swell wedding veil.' "

"So I took 'em off and put 'em on. But we had to ring down quick on the last act. The hotel man was out in front and recognized his curtains.

"So I gave up," Fanny sighed. "Rachel Lewis and this number four O'Neill had taken my chip diamond rings and pin and pawned them. They were beginning to come slow with the quarter a day for me and the dog. So I gave up and sat down to write to my mommuh to send me a ticket for home. And as I started to write I happened to look in a dingy mirror by the desk and I saw Lewis and O'Neill with their suitcases beating it out the side door.

"I ran and told a girl in the company and her mommuh, and the three of us followed 'em to the station. And when they got on the midnight train by one platform we got on by the other. And when the conductor says 'Tickets' we only pointed to Lewis and O'Neill in a seat ahead—and they had to pay our fare back to New York. . . . Don't wish a life like that on my baby."

"But your troubles were over now, Fanny."

"For me—maybe; but my mommuh! That girl and *her* mommuh I took to my home, and there they stayed for days and weeks, mostly in bed. They wouldn't work, they wouldn't move; just slept and ate. To this day my mommuh says: 'Don't bring me no actors!' "

"Are you going to raise this child to be an actress?" I asked, taking little Frances on my knee.

"Why not? She's already got a talent.—Baby, show the man what your mommuh does in the 'The Follies.' "

And I swear to you that the child actually did—shimmy. Right there on my lap.

"Now, baby, show the man what Ray Dooley does in 'The Follies.' "

I hastily transferred Frances Brice Arnstein from my knee to the carpet.

"Coward! You'd think you were Percy Hammond!—Show him, baby, what Ray Dooley does."

And I swear to you that the gifted infant opened a wide, wide grin and covered it with its hand for all the world as Miss Dooley does.

## Bert Williams' Last Interview



OME night my old friend Bert Williams, the very fine comedian, is going to give me a shock. Some night when I ease into his dressing room for a reflective pipe he will be cheerful and he will be talkative—and I will curl up in a swoon.

I've known him more years than some comedians or critics are old; and he is still the mournfulest of all the men I know. He is even more mournful than Ring Lardner, who used to inhabit a corner of Bert Williams' dressing room and match long gloomy silences with him.

I missed Ring Lardner when I went back stage at the Studebaker to see Bert Williams. Mr. Chappy said he missed Ring Lardner, too, said it was never so quiet and restful in the dressing room as when Mr. Lardner and Cap (as he calls his employer) got to saying nothing to each other for twenty minutes at a stretch. Mr. Chappy has been Bert Williams' valet for twenty-two years, and ought to be a good judge of muted gloom.

"I don't know which of those gentlemen," said Mr. Chappy, while Bert Williams was working his first shift in "Broadway Brevities," "is the silenter, and I ain't saying you couldn't get a person out of a deaf and dumb asylum that would beat either one of 'em. But I'll contend with my last dollar that they ain't a dumb man in the world could beat 'em both."

Bert Williams came back to listen to trouble, which seems to gravitate to him as naturally as a penny to a slot. Somebody had been doing wrong again to "Broadway Brevities," poor thing! and as ever Bert Williams was shouldering the black man's burden. A couple of minor comedians had "jumped the show," as the phrase is, taking with them the orchestra parts of the number that opened the second act. The leader, the stage manager, everybody was in a fume. They described the dirty trick with language in kind but inadequate—but I didn't know it was inadequate till Bert Williams summed the atrocity in a single word, deep from his diapason:

"Sabotage!"

He sat loose while Mr. Chappy rerobed him for his next appearance—in the ancient dress-suit and white cotton gloves and too small silk hat.

I think he stood up to change his pants; but I am not sure. I know he sat there, loose, jointless, wordless, while Mr. Chappy handed him his kinky wig and some prepared cork with which to blacken a light lemon-colored line on his forehead that showed below the wig.

The coat of this disreputable dress-suit is green from age. The pants are black only where they have been patched; the chassis of them is in hue a stale heliotrope. When I first saw those heliotrope pants—and they were veterans then—we had not been at war with Spain.

"Same pants, Brother Williams," said I, in whom the habit of conversation is incurable.

"Same," he assented, and, marvelously enough went on: "Same pants in which I appeared before the crowned heads of Europe."

It sounded very funny. Perhaps that was because it was so very true. There was a time in Europe, you know, when you weren't much of a king if you hadn't seen Bert Williams.

"I'm glad you've got a good song—at last."

"I'm glad, too, Brother Stevens."

"How'd you find this 'Moon Shine on the Moonshine'?"

"Didn't; it found me. Sang it for the record, picking out the notes and words as I went along." He illuminated by holding up an imaginary score. "Hit. Thought I might as well learn it for the show. So I worked it up. Pretty slow. Four months.—Drink?"

"No; still no. But where do you find it these days?"

"Don't; it finds me. Get a reputation as a regular seven-days-a-week consumer and you'll never suffer; there's a bootlegger waiting for you in every port."

"Well, I don't mean to flatter, but, Brother Williams, you certainly had the reputation of holding more——"

"Unearned."

"You didn't——!"

"Didn't hold it. I drank it, but I didn't keep it. I was like the old Romans. Every now and then I'd drink four or five big glasses of plain water and—liquor would leave me. Then I was ready for another set of drinks. It was a system."

"But why? You weren't selling the stuff."

"Why? Because, Brother Stevens, the saloon was the only club in which a man of my color could meet a man of your color. And I like my friends; like to be with them; like to be seen with them. I could do that in the saloon—some saloons. Other saloons, a few, weren't particularly cordial. You know." I knew.

" 'Heavy' saloons, I used to call them. I'd pop my head in the door of one of these 'heavy' saloons, and not seeing anybody I knew right well, I'd say, in my best London accent: 'Sorry! I thought Mr. Stevens was here. He promised to meet me here at five-thirty.' You see, I knew your time for this place, knew Brother Lardner's time for that place—I had everybody's schedule, and it required a lot of drinking on my part when you were all on time at your favorite drinking places."

"And when we weren't there?"

"A trifle harder on the feet, that's all. A little more standing around, diffidently . . . waiting . . . waiting for Mr. Lardner, or Mr. Houseman, or yourself. I always said I was waiting for somebody . . . even when I was only waiting for anybody . . . anybody who'd breeze in and say, 'Hello, Bert! what you doing here?' and give me a chance to chum and make myself at home. Funny what a man'll do for human companionship!"

"I hear Al Woods will make a star of you next season."

"A star? I asked him to bill it 'The Pink Slip *with.*'"

"Good play?"

"I think so. I'm a porter in the hotel at Catalina Island; an awful liar; but a character. And I've got a song coming along that ought to have character in it, too. I sing it with a dog; with a gangling-legged outcast dog. A lady has given me a dollar to take this dog out and feed him, and her husband has given me five dollars to take the dog out and drown him. There ought to be some character in that song, not to say problem. I'm working it out—slow—way I do every-



thing, Brother Stevens. But I think I ought to be able to understand the way that old black porter feels. Yes," he added, in that mellow, melancholy bass, "and I think I ought to be able to understand how the dog feels, too."



## When Justine Johnstone Was Natural



MY HEART turned sour for shame when I heard her manager utter my own doltish words to Miss Justine Johnstone.

Mr. Roth said to her, "be just yourself."

She must have known the suggestion had been my luckless own. She hardly looked at him as he repeated it and left us with the warning that he would be back at five to take her to meet his friend and former client, Miss Lillian Russell. But there was a derisive curl to the handsome smile with which she welcomed me to a chair beside the window-seat whereon she lazed.

In the picture she presented to the gaze of the confused beholder there were brown silk ankles, brown Russia pumps, a frock of bronze silk figured lightly with gold, a golden shock of hair that gleamed against the framed background of green lake and blue sky, and a face of cream and coral lit by cobalt eyes.

Miss Johnstone is one of the most beautiful American actresses I have ever seen, and I think American actresses are the most beautiful that anybody can see. But I had not come to discover Justine Johnstone's beauty.

"I'll take off my overcoat," I said, to say something.

"That would be the nice, natural thing to do; I'd be awfully disappointed if you didn't," she answered ironically.

I had not come to discover her beauty. No—ten thousand shames upon me!—I had come to see whether she had a sense of humor. And I hadn't long to wait.

"Do you know Mr. Roth very well?" she was asking.

"Fairly well."

"How well?"

"Oh—I gave him a cigar."

Now this was acid test Number One, and it is infallible. Any musical comedy person who has not a sense of humor will answer that burnished remark with: "What was the matter with it?"

Miss Johnstone said instead: "That sounds rather intimate"; and went on:

"I wanted to ask you whether you thought Mr. Roth the right sort of manager for a girl like me?"

"He was Lillian Russell's manager; he was Della Fox's manager; I dare say he was Helen of Troy's manager," I said, combining truth with amiability. "But why do you ask me?"

"Oh, he's such a bear at times. He's worse than a conscience. He's worse than the New York Office. If he sees me at supper with a man of less than eighty years he says he's afraid the Shuberts wouldn't approve!

"Do you know," she suddenly shot at me, "what I wanted to say to him when he spoke to me as he did just now?"

I thought I could feel the blow falling on my neck.

My blithering, cocksure notice of her opening in "Over the Top" flashed before me sickeningly:

*"She may have it (a sense of humor); and then, again, she mayn't. From where I sat last night you couldn't tell."*

"No," I faltered, "I don't know. But I'll bite. I'll be the, as it is well-termed, goat. What did you want to say to him?"

"I wanted to say: 'Mr. Roth, will you please oblige me by sitting on a tack?'"

The glacier was broken; we were acquainted now.

She likes to dream, but not to think. The deliberate processes of intellection bore her. She likes to snug up in a corner of her window and dream jokes. She was so human that her beauty ceased to be a fatal spectacle.

"Why don't you dream a joke or two for your part in the show?" I said, "and give a first-nighter a chance to know what sort of girl you really are?"

"What's the use! They'd treat my jokes the way they treat my songs. I go into the Shubert office and suggest a suggestion and they say:

"'A very good idea, but let's do it this way. We'll get you a nice new pink dress and let *him* sing the song to you.'"

"What do you say to that?"

"Oh, I say: 'No, it would be cleverer to give *him* the pink dress and let *me* sing the song.'"

"Why didn't they write that into the libretto?"

"Perhaps because I didn't say it to Mr. Wynn. He knows a joke—so long as it isn't subtle."

"Did you ever dream a joke for Ed Wynn?"

"Yes; I gave him the one that goes: 'Waiter, my plate's damp.' 'You dern fool, that's your soup.'"

"It's the best one in the piece. I—ahem—myself gave him one for the second act. I must go around and hear it."

"Which one?" she inquired with flattering interest.

"The one about the man who owed another a thousand jackasses and went to his creditor and offered Ed Wynn in payment."

"I don't recall it. What's the answer to that riddle?"

"The creditor says: 'You'll have to call some other day; I can't change that.'"

It was my acid test for humor Number Two—although heaven is witness that I had not submitted it for a test. And she did not say, "Yes, go on with the rest; I've got you so far." She laughed as gleefully as I had laughed the first time—or was it the second?—I heard it; and said:

"Why, that's a fine joke—*absolument!* Why doesn't he use it? And it's on himself. What could be better? But perhaps he thinks it's subtle. I love subtle things. I love only one thing that isn't subtle."

"What's that?"

"Youth. Youth isn't subtle. I love Stephen Leacock and Gilbert Chesterton and some of Meredith, but I love youth, too. Sometimes I think that some day I'll fall terribly in love with the sheer youth of some lad, and then——"

Her gesture implied that it would smite her hardest at the nape of her lovely neck.

"But then," she went on, "I never could stand a man that liked himself. And all men do—young or old. That's probably why I shall never really love any man."



"Perhaps," I suggested, "an actor—one who could be helpful——"

"Love an actor! Haven't I just told you I couldn't even love a man? Actor! No! *Absolument!*"

It was her favorite positive word.

We were in one of a cluster of rooms she occupied with her mother at the Blackstone. And she was happy to-day, she said, because mother's cough was less troublesome and the sun was bright and her candy tasted good.

Something always was coming up to the living room—flowers in vases, flowers in pots, a fatted flask that looked like the "pinch" bottle of Scotland, but contained only the essence of flowers, a rabbit gorged with Easter sweets, and finally a scarf that was made of the capsular bodies of twenty perfect imperial Russian sables.

She talked of furs and furbelows with a frank and engaging relish. Didn't I like the chinchilla coat she wore in the show—the one called Kerenski by the unstoppable Ed Wynn? Well, its illustrious maker, Richard Jaeckel, had been in Chicago and had come twice to the Garrick that week. Fancy!

"A compliment, indeed!" said I.

"But not for me," she laughed. "Mr. Jaeckel came to see his coat.

"I dote on saving money," she was telling me in another breath. "I save up lots and lots of it—and then some beautiful furs come along and take it all away."

"Have you always had a passion for furs?"

"Oh, no. There was a time in my life when I thought furs were only the things that well-to-do people wore to keep warm in. As a child I was poor

—more than romantically poor. At thirteen I worked as a child's cloak-model, in Harry Kitzinger's, Fourteenth and Fifth avenue, for seven dollars a week. A salesman introduced me to Walter Kingsley, press agent, who got me eighteen dollars playing one of the unborn children for Winthrop Ames in 'The Blue Bird.' Then I went to the brief 'Folies Bergere,' and when that broke I went to the fashionable boarding school at Larchmont.

"A charming, benevolent gentleman was instrumental in my going there. And I was very grateful to him—oh, very! But he was forty-two—and I was sixteen. You see, even then I loved youth.

"My photograph presently appeared in the *Green Book* and anxious mothers wanted to know if I was the sort of girl to be going to the same school with their daughters.

"But I left the Larchmont school without being fired," she smiled. "In three years I came out a dreamer, a bit bookish. I wanted to be a librarian—a Belle Green sort of librarian.

"Yes, I wanted to be a librarian—till one day I walked down Fifth avenue and saw all the beautiful clothes.

"I decided to have those clothes—somehow. But how? The stage was the only quick way. And I wanted to wear those clothes when I was still young. I would be an actress.

"I told a friend I would be an actress; and he told John Drew.

"'I can give her only twenty-five a week and she will have to furnish her own costumes,' said John Drew.

"So I went into the 'Follies' chorus for fifty a week and Zieggy furnished the costumes.

"And a couple of years have slipped by—and Mr. John Drew and I are stars playing in the same town—and some nights his receipts at the Princess are \$225. And that isn't right. The public is wrong. Those receipts are not right, I mean. I'm not saying," she smiled, "that the public is wrong about me. I'm not that ungrateful. *Absolument.*"

"It does look like Haig & Haig, doesn't it?" she said, fondling the flask of scent.

"Named after you?"

"Not yet. One usually starts by having cigars named—and then works up to toilet articles. But I dread the cigars. They are usually five-centers, aren't they? I'd hate to have anything bearing my name in the mouth of a man who'd smoke a five-cent cigar."

"You are not a democrat?"

"No, and I don't pretend to be anything that I'm not. I loathe the posing socialist—or any other kind of a poser. I like my own kind of people and only that kind. I'd bore the others, and they me. I wouldn't walk out with a stage-hand because I'm quite sure that neither of us would enjoy it. Bui, for that matter, I've never seen any railroad presidents that are especially delightful company."

"Where does your preference lie?"

"Just people—regular, nice, human people, with, if possible, a sense of humor." And she did not say it maliciously.

"Is Chicago always as lovely as this?" she asked, bathing her face in the sunshine.

"How do you usually find Chicago?"

"This is my first trip. I'm terribly untraveled. When I was a chorus girl I couldn't afford to leave New York. It would have injured my professional

reputation. I had to be a star before I'd consider leaving New York. And then you ought to see my five years' contract — there's everything in it but caviare for the canary. It ought to be a good contract — I copied it from the contract of the most exacting Jewish star that ever played for the Shuberts. But you mustn't tell her name. Of course, nobody can guess it."

"Any other part of this chat you'd like to edit, Miss Johnstone?"

"I can think of only one correction. I said I went to the 'Follies' for fifty, but it was really for seventy-five a week. Zieggy said I mustn't say it was over fifty. It was a confidential salary, Zieggy said. And as Kay Laurell and I had the same dressing room, you may bet I kept it confidential. *Absolument!*"







## Imperial Morris Gest



MORRIS GEST'S passion for his "Mecca" is the life-spark of that amplitudinous pagan orgy at the Auditorium. The very goats and camels grin contentedly behind their work when he wanders back stage. I'll swear I heard a camel laugh when Gest, asked by some dull fact-collector how much live stock he had with his show, enumerated them horn by horn and hump by hump and added, pulling at his thumb to complete the count, "—and me."

If the fabrics of "Mecca" could talk they would call Gest a great lover. Every cloth knows him by feel. Sometimes he seems to listen to rugs, and you wonder what they tell him. There is a storied coat of threadbare velvet broidered in strands of orange gold. It is two hundred years old and came off the back of a sheik who went too close to Monte Carlo. You know, the rich authentic robe of *Prince Nur Al-Din* which is worn by Herbert Grimwood.

When Gest lays that precious garment over your knees and strokes it as he would a living thing, it is not hard to understand why he refused to sell it as a museum piece for four thousand dollars one day when he hadn't a hundred in his own unembroidered jeans.

Old pillows are wearing new topcoats for Chicago—queer oriental weaves of luscious silk. Gest pats them where they gleam, and you obscenely ask him what those pillow-covers cost.

"Forty-five, forty-eight, fifty a yard," he mumbles, and almost angrily adds, "What of it? They're *real*."

"Yes, but who's going to know they're real?" you basely say.

White shows in his large eyes, and his plastic Russian mouth is white with teeth, and he beats the breast of his worn black coat with two tight fists as he cries: "*I know it! I know it! Isn't that enough?*"

He walks you from stage to theater—packed to the highest reaches—to foyer, and you glimpse the unbroken line at the box office.

"How does the prosperity feel?" you ask him. "How does it feel not to have the sheriff just one jump behind?"

"'Bout eighteen years ago, when they were nominating a President," he says dreamily, "I stood on this very spot with 'Bim the Button Man.' They said he never failed to pick the winner with his election buttons—and he didn't because he always had two sets made. I stood here with just a dollar ten cents in the world. And who can say Morris Gest wasn't happier then than he is today? Not a note was due—I wasn't good for a note. My only worry was my own fare back to New York—now I've got a thousand fares to figure. I wonder if I wasn't happier when I stood on this spot with just a dollar ten in my clothes?"

"Same suit of clothes you've got on now?" I ask in the interests of archeology.

"I wouldn't be surprised," says Gest, "if this is the same hat, too." He takes off and regards with shame-faced affection the old velours lid that, I'll swear, was an ancient one when he brought the first Russian ballet to our shores.

"Seriously," says I, "when are you going to get yourself a new suit?"

"Seriously," he answers, "just as soon as I pay off the two hundred and fifty thousand I still owe on 'Mecca.'" And he adds (honor compels me to publish what he adds):

"I did plunge, when I was in London last year, to the extent of a new overcoat. But a Chicago critic friend of mine I met in New York said it looked better on him."

(Yes, honor compels me to publish it even though the joke, like the overcoat, is on me.)

Here is Frank Tours, the English leader who is now a unionist and an American in good standing, come to pass a cigaret during the entr'acte. Gest compliments him for what he has done with a new orchestra in a large and important score.

"In our first talk I told the house leader," says Tours, "that no doubt we'd have any number of good musicians who'd been playing with the opera. He reminded me that Mary Garden had taken the opera orchestra to New York. 'But don't you worry,' he said. 'I'll tell you what we have got—we've got absolutely the same men that played for Jolson in "Sinbad."' And what," Mr. Tours wants to know, "could be fairer than that?"

Gest laughs. He saves his nerve-knotted life every day by laughing. And Tours has another.

He left the leadership of Daly's, in London, one night to try an operetta in the provinces. There were four pieces and a piano in the pit, and he played the piano. He complimented the men. Accustomed to thirty-five bandsmen at least, he didn't know, he said, that five could produce such a volume. "That was nothing," the local leader deprecated; 'you should hear the full seven.'"

Gest laughs a laugh as soft as his habitual soft

collar, as rippling as his everlasting Windsor tie. He hunches comfortably in his first chair since dinner—if he remembered to dine—and I, in a manner of speaking, spill the salt by mentioning ticket speculators. Now he's off:

"I take Hammond's and your advice to cut the Chicago prices of 'Mecca' a dollar lower than New York—I really want to do something decent for the city that put me on my feet with 'Aphrodite'—and along come the speculators and try to charge more than I've cut. Don't you see?—they try to defeat my cut price. Without risking a dollar they try to suck the blood of my enterprise. I'm not against decent brokers who charge fifty cents extra. But when they charge ten, twenty times that, as they did for 'Aphrodite' and are attempting to do for 'Mecca,' I can't discriminate between decent brokers and sure-thing bloodsuckers; the good have to suffer with the bad.

"I know ticket speculating as well as I know the stage," he goes on, his mouth firm now, his eyes sparkling. "I was a stage 'clearer' for twenty-five cents a day—and I know when a stage is swept. And I was a ticket speculator—and I know that it takes a thief to catch a thief. I might have been a ticket speculator now, fattening on the gambles and imaginations of gamer men, if Mr. Hammerstein hadn't one day called me in off the street and said, 'Young fellow, you're too smart for this; I want you to go to Europe and pick artists for me.' I never thought then I'd see the day I'd sew up four hundred and eight thousand dollars of good borrowed money and more than four hundred and eight quarts of blood in one show."

"Is 'Mecca' the last of your big ones?" I ask him.

"I thought it was—the conditions, the expense, were heart-breaking; I thought I was through. I

thought so sure," he runs on, "when Mr. Belasco takes me by the arm after the first night of 'Mecca' in New York and says to me: 'Russian' (Mr. B. always calls me 'Russian' when there's excitement), 'Russian,' says he, 'you've gone as far as anybody can go. Now quit!'

"But how *can* I quit? Listen to that orchestra! Look at that ballet of throbbing flesh! Feast your eyes on those silks from Persia, Syria, from the desert of Sahara! *Can* I quit? Which is the stronger, my head or my soul, my brain or my heart?

"I don't think I'll quit till I've made Barnum and Bailey's look like a vaudeville act—or I've gone broke."

"Going broke has never stopped you," said I.

"True," he answered thoughtfully, perhaps prophetically; "going broke is sometimes my finest inspiration."





## Alone at Last With Helen Hayes



WILL leave it to the impartial reader if a mamma does not make all the difference in the world to an interview with her daughter.

Miss Helen Hayes' mamma was very much at home when I called on Miss Hayes at the Ambassador. She is a compelling hostess. There were many moments when I couldn't see anybody, hear anybody but Miss Hayes' mamma.

She was as unignorable as her daughter had been the night before at Cohan's in the opening performance of "To the Ladies!" A lady of high social spirit and ready phrase, she took the conversation into her competent hands and made it general, impersonal, polite.

The taste, the tone, were perfect; we sounded like characters in one of those drawing-room plays wherein positively nothing happens. We seemed to cover every unimportant subject under the sun. We even talked—heaven forgive us!—of dear dead "Pollyanna."

And I thought I detected a twinkle in the clear eye of Miss Helen when that gifted angel child remarked that a whole season of "Pollyanna" (she once served thirty days) would make her feel like going out and doing something outright bad. Her mother looked slightly bewildered.

"Make you feel like going out and getting five drinks and a South American?" I suggested, I know not why.

"A South American?" questioned her mamma.

"I always think of Rodolph Valentino as a South American," said I, desperately.

"I've seen him in the pictures and I think he's splendid," Miss Hayes encouraged.

At this sparkling moment I put my hand on an open book that lay beside me on the sofa, and, "Don't!" cried Miss Hayes' mamma, rescuing the book from me.

"Don't!" she warned. "Don't look at it! It was highly recommended to read on the train. But I wouldn't have Helen see it for the world!—You were speaking of Rodolph Valentino. I saw an advertisement for one of his pictures that read—what do you think!—"The Kiss That Burns." I had to read to the bottom of the column to find that it was not the title of a play but only an ad for 'Blood and Sand.' "

"I'd like to meet the man that writes those curdling ads," said Miss Helen, ever so quietly.

"Helen!" said her mamma.

"I *should!*" said Helen.

"I think I could fix it," said I; "I know Will Page."

"Will Page!" said mamma, mollified, I know not why. "Why, he's a Washington boy!—But I've got to go and arrange for the apartment we're moving to tomorrow. I simply *must.*"

I rose.

"Oh, don't let me take you away. I'll be back in half an hour. Don't feel that you have to——"

"Wild horses," I said, looking at Helen, "couldn't drag me."

Although Miss Helen comfortably curled herself up at the other extreme of the long davenport on which I sat, I think we had a minute or two, or at least a second or two, of self-consciousness at finding ourselves

alone together. At any rate I know that I became strangely professional and talked to her earnestly about her acting, which is one of not many things in the theater that appeal to me seriously; and I remember that I asked her who, of all the actors, is to her mind the Master.

"Mrs. Fiske," she said.

And I could have hugged her for that—and other things. For I don't mind saying here to you, as I couldn't say there to her, that Helen Hayes is about my idea of the American girl and the American actress. She has charm, beauty, personal flavor, humor, heart, imagination, humility and a high technical discretion—everything, within modesty and reason, including great common sense. Anyway, this paragraph—minus its first sentence—will make a cute little catalogue for her scrap-book.

"Mrs. Fiske has been more my religion—than my religion," the darling child went on, and described for me a scene in "Wake Up, Jonathan!" where Mrs. Fiske expressed herself solely by tapping the floor with a nervous slipper.

"Her toe," concluded Miss Hayes, "is more eloquent than the whole body of any other actor. She's a divine creature, and I'd like to act on the same stage with her, if only as one of the mob." (Which is a finer compliment than ever I've been able to pay you, dear lady, in all these many years—although, you may remember, I once did have the cheek to write, "Dull people do not like Mrs. Fiske's acting.")

"You're as unlike her as violets are unlike orchids," I said, or something equally flowery; "and yet you share with her the precious quality of untheatricality."

"But I like 'theater' in the theater!" protested Helen Hayes. "I went to see 'The Monster' in New

York the other night and I loved Wilton Lackaye's very entrance. It was so theatrical. He carved every word he spoke. He had a grand time, and I envied him and hated the sweet little parts I have to play."

"Was he better than Skinner?"

"I've never seen Skinner—what's he like?"

"Just oozes 'presence.'"

"I should love him," she sighed—"and hate the things I have to play. I get so weary of being sweet . . . and dear . . . and pure."

"You would like," I asked with an ear to my story, "to be a bad woman—on the stage?"

"I'd adore it—a regular Borgia, only modern. I'd like to have just one chance to be—well—you know—brilliant. And in this sophisticated day a woman doesn't seem to be brilliant—on the stage—unless she's been wicked. I want to be wicked—on the stage, of course."

"Of course," I agreed.

"Oh, not that I wouldn't want to be wicked off the stage, and would be," the flower-faced infant vowed, "if I really wanted to. But I have no inclination to be a bad woman in my private life. There's something terribly wanting in me, all right," she deplored.

"But you are very young, Helen," the Devil prompted me to suggest.

"Not so very, very young," she flared. "And I'd give—I'd give fifteen years of my life to be fifteen years older and know . . . You know, I had to give up reading the lives of the great actresses."

"You were afraid——?"

"That I'd be tempted to do as they'd done? No; that I wouldn't be. I knew I was hopelessly moral. The great actresses tell us it was their hectic loves that made them great artists. And I haven't the first

talent for being hectic. I guess I've got no temperament. I was reading Emma Calve's book the other night. Her lover had written her that 'all was over.' And she got in a gondola and went up and down the streets of Venice all night singing at the top of her voice to relieve her agony. I don't think I could do that."

She curled up tighter on the sofa, sitting on her brown-silk little-girl legs, and adding what I hastened to write into the transcript word for word, saying to myself that I would show this note to my distinguished friend, critic and desk-mate, James Weber Linn, who says, and is not the only one who says, "No doubt, my dear Stevens, these beautiful women give you the facts; but the phrasing, the epigram, is your own."

"One of the shames of my life," she added, as she curled herself and pulled down the hem of her primly tailored skirt, "is that I have nothing to be ashamed of."

"I don't know," she was presently puzzling, "whether it is good policy for me to expose my blameless life."

"You advertise your virtue——" I started to say.

"I reluctantly advertise my virtue——" she interrupted to correct.

"By always being companioned by your mother. Although I must say that to-day she has——"

"To-day," said Helen, "she was torn between her duty to me and the new flat. But since I've been so frank, I might as well go the whole distance and confess to you that even my mother has complete confidence in me—now. Yes, even my mother trusts me! A year ago she would not, she did not, leave us alone together. But here we are! And I know," she mourned, "the day is coming when my friends will leave me with their husbands, saying, 'Helen, do take care of



John for a few days while I'm out of town.'—You must hate writing an interview every week."

"They're not all like this one," I owned.

"But what if you hadn't been nice to my opening in this morning's paper? What if you'd said mean, witty things about me?"

"One can't be witty without being mean?"

"It doesn't seem so, does it?" she most humanly answered. "Did you ever hear of anybody remembering what a critic said in a 'good notice'?"

"No."

"But I'd have been awfully uncomfortable for *you* if you'd been mean to me in this morning's paper. I once sat at a dinner with a man that had written the meanest—because it was so horribly true—thing in the world about me. He was Franklin P. Adams, and he had said that in 'The Wren' I suffered from fallen archness. He was most uncomfortable at dinner; he seemed to feel that he had to live up to his line. He was stiff and cold—that's the way it reacted on him. And I felt so sorry for him. Finally he said, 'I hope you don't dislike me for what I wrote.'"

"I hope you don't dislike me," I said, "for what I didn't write. The play caught me and took so much of my space."

"I knew—and, besides, I liked better just the few incisive words. They gave me a little choke—here. But if you'd been mean I should probably have had tea waiting (you're sure you won't have some, anyway?) and been all on edge to spare your feelings. I'd have been—well, you know how two women will cover a situation with a kiss."

"You don't mean that if I had——?"

"No, I don't think I should have gone quite that far," she comforted.



## Nora Bayes on Lovers



R. BAYES! Mr. Bayes!"

It was the voice of a page in the Congress Hotel, where Miss Nora Bayes was lunching Mr. Irving Fisher, her handsome young singing mate in "The Cohan Revue," and the writer—meaning me.

"Mr. Bayes! Mr. Bayes!"

"Perhaps he means you," said Nora, who was meaning young Fisher.

He accepted the service. "I'll attend to it," he said—whatever it was—"and be back in a little while"; and he left us with one of those highly dental smiles through which he sometimes sings.

Nora's eyes followed him to the door. "Irving is a dear, sweet boy," she said. "And now—what shall we talk of?"

"Shall we talk of love?" I suggested.

"Nothing could be happier," said Nora; and did.

"There is no success in work or play without it," said Nora—meaning love.

"How old is the nice boy?" said I, meaning Fisher.

"Who? Irving? Oh—thirty-four. But he doesn't look within ten years of it, does he? His shyness makes him appear younger."

"Lucky youth!"

"He's a fine, clean nature all the way through.

And you have no idea how bright. He has an elfin, Barrie-like spirit."

"I'm glad you're harmonious."

"I should say we are," said she. "Irving Fisher does some things that Jack Norworth couldn't do."

"Youth!" I apostrophized.

"When we are doing a song together, Irving resists answering my witticisms. He never spoils them by trying to get back at me."

"But when you are alone with him——?"

"Oh, then he's as funny as can be. He has a fairy-like sense of humor."

"It's quite plain that you love him dearly."

"I should say I do! You know, sometimes I think that of all my mental lovers I love Irving best."

"Your *what*?"

"Mental lovers is what I said and meant."

"I'm afraid I don't follow."

"Why, bless your poor crude soul, I'm beginning to think you don't myself."

"You mean you aren't married to him, or going to be?"

"Now what did that dear, sweet boy ever do to me that I should make a husband of him!"

"But from what you said I thought——"

"Of course you did. You were listening with a low, earthly ear while I was talking on a higher plane."

"I thought you were talking of love."

"I was, you poor fish," she elegantly answered, "but not your kind of love. I meant universal love, mental love. That's the only kind I indulge in—now. I want no lovers but mental lovers."

"Your plurals are baffling—how many of these mental lovers have you?"

"Thirty-six in the trenches and two at home," said Nora Bayes without batting a lash.

And carefully, painfully she bored it into my heavy head that love to Nora Bayes of the nowadays is a flame of the spirit and a rapture of the soul.

"If I had found my religion sooner," she went on, "Jack and I could have been comfortably parted long before we were. Oh, not that we ever quarreled! We never did that. Every morning we woke up laughing.

"But now all my husbands and I are friendly. Two of them, my first and third, wrote to me last week and I got their letters in the same post. Jack, too, has nothing but the best wishes for me."

"I heard a story the other day——"

"I don't know what it is, but it isn't true," she laughed. "All the off-color stories are attributed to me. If you want to get an audience in the Lambs' Club all you have to do is say, 'Here is one that Nora Bayes told.'"

"Why, one day an actor told an awful story in the Lambs'. Said it was one of mine. And who does he pick on to tell it to but my second husband, Harry Clarke."

"Did Harry kill the actor?"

"No; none of my husbands are violent men. But Harry convinced the actor that I couldn't have told him the story at the time specified—because I wasn't in town when the specified thing happened.

"Not that it worries me a little bit," she ran on. "My worrying days are over. Now not even an opening night rattles me. That's where my philosophy and religion come in. I ask myself: 'Is there any sane reason why God shouldn't love you on Monday night

in Chicago when He permitted you to be a riot on Thursday night in Pittsburgh?" Not on your life!

"That's where the human family is prone to err—in trying to make God work according to a human time-table. I remember Florence Nash coming to me in fear and trembling at the Palace. They'd changed her time from four to three, and she was afraid the second week's opening audience would crucify her.

"‘See here,’ I says to Florence, ‘you’ve got a hell of a nerve fixing it all up with yourself that God will make you good at four o’clock and rotten at three. Why, you’re all trembling and sighing like a north wind—how do you expect the public to love you when you go out to them like that? That’s what’s the matter, Florence—you aren’t letting the public love you enough.’

"And while I talked to her the color came back to her face and her eyes brightened—she had something to give. She wouldn't accept my offer to trade places with her in the bill, but went on at three and duplicated her four o'clock hit of the week before—and why not?

"God," she summed, "has no union hours."

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And then she was asking me what was humor—as though I could answer that! And wasn't it something childlike?—which nobody can deny? And don't you feel in your heart before you do in your head?—which, of course, you do. And she named names to attest the juvenescence of her favorite humorists of the stage.

"Laurette Taylor," she said, "is a *gamine*. Fred Stone is an urchin. Warfield is a St. Bernard—in his best moments a romping puppy of love and laughter.

And who could be more childlike than Eddie Foy? No! I did not say childrenlike. But I will—and laugh at it. I always laugh at my own nuttyisms—it helps 'em along.

“Yet”—and she paused as though to say, “This is going to be profound and way beyond your depth”—“yet Jake Shubert, who is our greatest censor of the drama, once said to me:

“‘Nora Bayes, who the devil ever told you that you are funny?’”

“And Mr. Shubert still lives?”

“Yes; and so does Sam Bernard. Sam, who is my friend, who would do anything for me—Sam says to me with honesty in every breath:

“‘Nora, you are our greatest singer of songs, but why do you think you must be funny?’”

“‘Sam,’ I answered, ‘you don’t mean to say that I have so badly hypnotized myself that I think the audience is laughing with me when it’s only laughing at me?’”

“‘Sure!’ says Sam.

“Now, look here, Ashton Stevens,” said Nora Bayes, “I want to ask you——”

“No,” I said, “let me ask you: Do you think Nora Bayes is funny?”

“Yes,” said Nora Bayes, “I think Nora Bayes is funny. I think I am Irishly funny. I sit and laugh and laugh at some of the things I say. And I wouldn’t laugh if they weren’t funny, would I? Of course I wouldn’t, you poor fish!”

“Give me a specimen of your own kind of fun.”

“All right. I’ll tell you something I wrote to one of my lovers. I wrote to him:

“‘I am so lonesome for you that I don’t know



what to do. And I'm so glad that you are not here to see how lonesome I am—because it would break your heart.'

"How do you like it?"

"Fine. Sounds like poetry. Is it?"

"No, you poor goat; it's an Irish bull, that's what it is. I think it's almost as funny as Shakespeare's joke—where Desdemona says, 'Where's my handkerchief?' And Othello says, 'Use your sleeve and let the show go on.' I think it is a very good Irish joke, and that I am a very good Irish jokess."

"When do you go to France?"

"I'm not going. President Wilson told me he thought I could do better work for the soldiers over here, if I would. So I'm giving up this job with the 'Revue' pretty soon and traveling around the thirty-six Liberty theaters for about twelve weeks.

"And I'm *not*," she went on, "doing my bit—just because I'm playing all these theaters and taking no pay for it and paying my own expenses.

"I'm doing just a bit of my bit, that's all," she said with soft star-spangledness. "I want all the wives and sisters and sweethearts to know that I feel that these audiences, before whom I shall have the privilege of appearing, are getting ready to fight for us in Europe. They make it possible for America to have safe homes to live in—and for me to have theaters open in which I can appear and earn my living. I'm not making any greater sacrifice than Irving Fisher is."

"He tours the Liberty Theaters with you?"

"Yes, and so does another of my inseparable mental lovers—Harry Akst, my pianist."

"Aren't you afraid?"



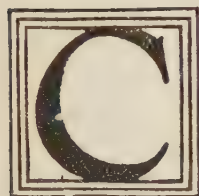
"Of marriage?"

"It's been known to happen!"

"Yes, especially to me. But I'm off the marriage stuff for life, my boy. I can love a man now without giving up my name and address. I can, so to speak, have a new husband for breakfast every morning—and without the horrible formality of living with them. S-s-sh! Here comes Irving, and there are things he's too young to hear."



## Lynne Overman's Long Rehearsal



COMING home after a coca-cola with Lynne Overman, who plays (immortally, I think) the soused hero in "Just Married," I blew the dust from the gilt top of my Roget's "Thesaurus of English Words and Phrases" and opened the helpful volume at the word Sobriety. For while Mr. Overman's alcoholic art is, as I had learned, in the nature of self-expression, he is, in the language of a once familiar ballad, on the water wagon now—for three years, and, he says, forever.

Roget, I found, does not list water wagon. Sobriety and teetotalism are his only abstract nouns under this head. One who does not imbibe is a water-drinker, an abstainer, a teetotaler, a Good Templar, or, grouped, a band of hope. To take the pledge is Roget's single verb, and for adjectives he allows only sober and sober as a judge. A teetotal of exactly ten.

But under the adjoining head of Drunkenness Roget runs on to the tune of some two hundred words and phrases. One may revel all the way from temulency to tremens, inducing these states by a consumption of gin, grog or even the Edgar Allan Poetic "blue ruin." One may, according to Roget, p. 413, "drain the cup," "splice the main brace" and "take a hair of the dog that bit you" to become a toper, a tippler, a soaker or a toss-pot.

In a word, there are two hundred chances of a

man becoming what Roget calls potent as against ten of his becoming what he calls a teetotalist. I give the figures to show that when Mr. Overman won the Great Sahara, the "book" was twenty to one against him.

The metaphor reminds me that Mr. Overman, at the age of fourteen, began his career as a splicer of the main brace, not on the bounding main, but on the back of a restless thoroughbred at four-thirty a. m., with four ounces of raw whisky in his otherwise empty stomach. He did that every morning for many mornings, on the small-time race tracks of his native Missouri.

"The horse owners had a theory," he told me over the coca-cola in the Auditorium Bar—where a couple of years ago such fluid would not have been served at any price—"that breakfast settled the nerves. They wanted all the 'edge' they could get from our nerves when we stable boys took the horses out for exercise at dawn. We got no breakfast till half-past nine or so, and started the day with half a tumbler or more of whisky. So you see I began where most drinkers leave off . . . Yes, you might say that up to three years ago, when I quit for keeps, my whole life had been spent in training for this pickled part in 'Just Married.' My performance is getting more credit than it's entitled to. Believe me, old man," he said in his cool level treble, with his cool even smile, "it's more nature than art."

Mr. Overman's mother, to whom he is shyly devoted, made a trade with him whereby he could follow the horses in Summer so long as he came home for the Winter's schooling. He followed them as stable boy and jockey around the county fairs of Missouri and as far as Denver and Helena. In Helena he "got the

boots," as he technically explained it, and wandered east to Chicago, where he made his first acquaintance with the Drama. It was at the Trocadero, where they sold stock burlesque to visiting firemen and agrarians, and Miss Milly De Leon was the shapely divinity of the show. It was her wont to slip a garter at every performance and have the damage repaired by an envied male confederate who sat in a stage box.

"So that was your first appearance as an actor?" I prematurely concluded.

"No," said Mr. Overman; "I never got as high as Milly's garter, but I stood in the lobby and sold imitations of it for twenty-five cents apiece. They were mounted on a plush card and made nice sleeve-holders for the firemen. Business was fair; I ate occasionally and drank often."

When Milly's garter had exhausted its spell for young Mr. Overman, he went to Seattle, where the racing and dicing were kind to him, and took his winnings to Sitka, Alaska, where the cost of drinking was so high as presently to drive him to commercial employment. He clerked for the Pacific Stores Company, without becoming the president or even the vice-president of that considerable corporation, and returned to home and school at Trenton, Missouri, subsequently to join Ward and Wade's Mastodon Minstrels.

"End man?" I asked, hopefully.

"Not exactly," said Mr. Overman. "I fetched hot water for the end men, and sold song books, and they let me play the cymbals in the parade. I forgot what I got for doing this, but one day when I told Bide Dudley, whose brother was one of the owners of the show, that I didn't get it all, he came back at me in his colyum by saying: 'What the hell's he kicking

about? We took him out of Trenton, Missouri, didn't we?"

"Well," said I, "anyway, with the minstrel show you didn't have to drink four ounces of whisky every day at sunrise."

"No," said Mr. Overman; "with the minstrels we didn't begin drinking till it was time to get up for the morning parade. But the nights were longer and wetter."

He took his savings, such as they were, to Hot Springs, Arkansas, where they were disastrously invested in craps at a place famed as the White Elephant.

"Cleaned!" said he. "I was drinking champagne when I went in, and I couldn't buy a beer when I came out."

"Aren't you ever going to become an actor?" Mr. Overman's biographer inquired.

"Right now I am going to become an actor. A friend of mine in Hot Springs gave me his job while he went on a week's vacation, and I played my first part in a store window. I was *Psycho*—'Is He Man or Wax?' I sat in front of a horseless piano in a store window and the saps would press their noses against the glass and bet whether I was stuffed—and I couldn't break my trance to take any of the bets."

"That's where you learned your fatal repose?"

"That's where I earned thirty-five dollars and learned to appreciate ham and eggs. . . . Then I got a job selling Houser's Elixir with a medicine show and enough money to wear good clothes back to Trenton, Missouri . . . and swing on the awning rope there in front of George Lee's Restaurant—'Short Orders at All Hours'—and tell the town boys the adventures of a man of travel and a judge of whisky.



"But I wanted to be an actor, and mother staked me to the trip to New York and to two trunks—full name on each trunk; one marked 'theater,' one marked 'hotel'; oh, I went right! I had a hall room, 4 by 16, where I had to stand my trunks one on top of the other, and my landlady, Mrs. Fitzpatrick, used to say, 'My boy's an actor, too, and never has a cent, either.'

"I got a job," Mr. Overman amazingly went on, "as stage manager of a stock company at New Haven. It was an awful stock company and I learned a thousand things that ought not to be done, and I learned how not to do a few of them. Then I had thirty-four unforgettable weeks with the Gardner & Vincent Repertory Company without leaving the State of Pennsylvania. We were quartered in boarding houses and even our laundry bills paid for by the show. If we wanted a pair of shoes, we had to get an order from the manager. But that isn't why that thirty-four-week engagement is unforgettable. Gardner and Vincent owed me—they still owe me—four hundred and twenty-seven dollars. That's the correct figure. It's graven on my soul."

"But didn't you get four hundred and twenty-seven dollars' worth of experience as an actor?"

"I was engaged as leading juvenile man and never got a beard off my face! I didn't know, when I took the job, that the juvenile man in a repertory company always wears the beards and plays *Charles*, his friend, or the sheriff, because the leading man plays all the juvenile parts. That's where I left repertory flat on its spine for three long thirsty years while I did 30,000 miles of travel with number two or number ten companies."

"Leading man?"

"God, no! My first job as leading man was with a stock company at South Norwalk, Connecticut. I lasted eight weeks and nearly died of pride and gin fizzes. Then I went to the stock company at Union Hill, New Jersey, where Jane Cowl was stock star, and for the first time in my life I could say that I was working in and about New York."

"Leading man?" I persevered.

"That wasn't my contract. I went as juvenile and expected to wear the beards. But Eugene O'Brien was suffering some mental shock or something and couldn't learn his part in 'Old Heidelberg'; so I got it letter perfect in twelve hours—with a pot of coffee and a quart of whisky. They apologized for me before the first curtain went up, but after the second came down they announced me as the leading man for the rest of the season. It was champagne for me that night. . . . And this is where my little history ceases to be interesting, for I was soon in New York, playing the lead in 'Oh, Boy!'—it's only the climb, the bumps, the is-he-man-or-wax, that's interesting."

"How'd you come to get permanently sober?"

"Because I couldn't get any more fun out of being permanently drunk. I was being marked as irresponsible. Managers were giving me warnings. I'd stay straight a couple of weeks, then I'd meet up with a couple of ball players and it would be all off. I became a traveling souse; I'd come to in strange places. I woke up once in Montreal, once in Hot Springs, Virginia, another time in New Orleans; and each time I thought I was waking up in New York. I got to palling around with the dwarfs, those midgets that inhabit the foots of beds and take their exercise on the chandelier—those midgets that once sent Nat Goodwin to a hospital,

where a nurse assured him she had thrown every last one of them out of the window. Nat looked out the window, and just then the diminutive Marshall P. Wilder got out of a cab and Nat had a relapse. Well, the dwarfs paid me a long visit. It was my last chance, and I took it and quit. I don't regret a drink I ever drank, and I'll never drink another."

It was a long stretch for the fair, lean and lazy Lynne Overman, whose words are habitually as spare as himself.

"Then you've capitalized a thousand jags in this authentic performance?"

"Well," he smiled, "I certainly didn't have to go out into the bright places and make a special study of the inebriate. I'll admit the part came awfully easy to me."



## The Self-Doubting Pauline Lord



HAD to work hard," said Miss Pauline Lord. "Look at the face I had to overcome!"

I was looking. Bright brown eyes I saw under thick masses of bright brown hair; bright teeth in a full mobile mouth; no positive line of beauty anywhere, but everywhere brightness. It was a face that victoriously paid the price of intelligence.

"Great beauty," I said eloquently, "is a persuasive letter of introduction to the Stage, but a handicap to anything less than great acting. Maxine Elliott would have been a great comedienne if she hadn't been a greater beauty; for she has the intelligence. Now, look at Mrs. Fiske——!"

"So many people seem to think she's the only actress I've ever looked at!" Miss Lord rejoined. "It started years ago when a critic on the *Sacramento Bee* said I reminded him of Mrs. Fiske. And I'd never seen Mrs. Fiske—as I innocently believed her name was pronounced. I never saw her till she played *George Sand*. But I suppose the comparison comes from our both being rather staccato, and smallish, and unbeautiful."

"You both have in your acting the priceless quality of honesty," I said; and went on to tell Miss Lord how in my youth I had been pained by what seemed to me to be the dishonest acting of the spotlit Richard

Mansfields, and was on the point of leaving the Drama supinated, when along came the veracious Minnie Maddern Fiske and the credible Nat Goodwin to show me that I had not been disrelishing Mr. Mansfield's arch histrionism in vain (of course I am here compacting my eloquence into fewer, if longer, words).

"Nat Goodwin!" She echoed the name thrillingly. "He was the spirit of acting!"

"Ah! so that's where you got your inspiration!"

"I saw him act when I was very young—out in California—and straightway asked him to let me play any part so's to be on the same stage with him. He told me to look him up if I ever came to New York. I went to New York; I wrote him that I was on my way; I thought he'd meet me at the station with a part. I found him, and got a part—that big." She measured it on her thumb.

"Oh, well," I said, "with that start no wonder you're what and where you are! I only marvel you didn't arrive sooner."

"But I played the part so badly," she said—and said as though it might have been played only yesterday—"that he said I was absolutely incompetent, hopeless. He sent me home."

"And I saw that man barter golden manuscripts to get Maxine Elliott away from T. Daniel Frawley's stock company! He sent you home?"

"Yes; but I wouldn't stay sent. I caught up with him again, and he made me Edna Goodrich's understudy. For one thing or another she was frequently out of the bill—he was playing repertory—and I had a chance to play her parts in her clothes, six sizes too big for me. I got twenty-five a week, and some weeks I earned it."



"Did Nat Goodwin ever tell you that you 'had it'?"

"Well, one day when I was pretty much discouraged, he said: 'Polly, if you'll burn a little oil you'll become an actress!' That was enough. I stuck. I worked hard—lots of stock; I worked hard in a hard school."

"Do you regret it? I mean, do you wish this real success had come to you earlier?"

"Do you think I'm a real success?" she asked without guile.

"Your performance in 'Anna Christie' is the best thing that's happened to me in the theater this year. You see, I couldn't quite 'see' you as a great actress in 'Samson.'"

"I wasn't—and I never want to play another 'translation.'"

"But my canny and envied colleague, O. L. Hall, 'saw' you in that translation."

"He gave me wonderful encouragement. And in 'Anna Christie' Eugene O'Neill has given me a wonderful part. An actress would have to be pretty bad to fail in this part. Mr. O'Neill has genius. He has a genius for modesty, too."

"You've got a little of that."

"I've got a lot of self-doubt, that's all."

"You ought to be a very happy girl."

"Instead of which, I keep asking myself, Am I happy?"

"Didn't you get a great awakening thrill on the New York first night of this play?"

"It was dramatic. They cheered. I saw hats thrown up and caught and thrown again. I can look back and see that opening night. But what I most clearly see is Mr. O'Neill, hiding back stage behind a

barrel. He'd die sooner than go out and face his audience. I can see him, when the curtain is finally down, coming out and shyly praising me in that great hour of *his!*"

"Arthur Hopkins must have had something to say, too, considering the night made you his star?"

"Yes; he seemed to take it for granted that I had reached the time, or the part."

"But didn't you yourself feel the thrill of this dramatic first night?"

"Not a nerve of feeling—for myself. I needed success—oh, Lord, how I needed it!—but I had been working and hoping for Mr. O'Neill's play. And when I picked up the papers next morning I did not—as people of our profession so often do—begin at the bottom, looking for my own name. I began at the top. . . . Perhaps my intense interest in the play helped my performance. My performance was 'set' by this time; no sudden starship could change it, no unaccustomed praise.

"Perhaps it's just as well I wasn't brought up on praise," she dryly smiled. "The best I ever got from my mother was: 'The lady who sat next to me said you were awfully good, Polly, so I guess you are!' My brother was more extravagant, because more surprised. He said: 'My God, ma, the kid is good!' "

I explained Miss Lord's unsudden rise to Miss Lord while she filled our cups and invited me to puff my pipe in her airy drawing room at the Congress. "Maybe," I said, "you weren't a sufficiently good bad actress in stock."

"Maybe!" she laughed, and it was the only time I heard her laugh.

She can be cheerful without laughter; she can be cheerful with a rather uncheerful voice; she can be cheerful about a professional past which was gray when it wasn't brown.

"I used to meet actresses at parties who were successes," she was saying, between quick, sometimes ironic smiles. "And I'd tell myself that I must be like them if I would succeed like them. They'd talk the American language Englishly, with that curious exaggerated enrichment, like, like—what's it like?"

"Like that," I said, and arched the little finger of the hand that held my cup.

"Yes; they talked with a curve—with no 'r's' where an 'h' would do as well, and with a marvelous contraction of syllables on words such as 'circumstances.'" She wondrously and convulsingly congested that word. "I tried to learn how to pronounce the word 'been' like a vegetable; in fact, I tried my darnedest to conventionalize myself—off stage, always off: I never had the nerve to try it on the stage. I should have sickened with shame.

"But just the same," she whimsically confessed, "I managed to pick up a little bag of tricks—about six tricks. I used all six on a part in a play called 'The Talker,' and made a so-called hit. But only half of the six would fit my next part, and none would fit the part after that. So I had to get down to rock bottom and begin acting all over again—just plain acting this time, without any tricks."

"That's your trick now—no tricks?"

"I find," she philosophically answered, "it's easier for me to get people to believe what I say and do on the stage when I believe it myself."



## Brownie and Bunny of "The Follies"



It is not for me to say that Brownie Curtis and Bunny Butler are the beautifullest show girls in all the "Ziegfeld Follies." In the first place, I don't want to be mobbed by forty-eight other "Follies" girls who may be of forty-eight other opinions. In the second place, Brownie and Bunny aren't.

They are beauties—of course! But limited trains do not stop for them without signal, nor does the traffic policeman, when they pass by, cross his mittened fingers and try to think of the loved ones at home. Bank cashiers have not—yet—betrayed their trust for the sake of Bunny and Brownie, and as these words wind to press, Brownie and Bunny haven't got a single silk-lined limousine to their backs.

Not homely girls, you will have the wit to know: there are no homely girls in Mr. Ziegfeld's company—I mean chorus. But Brownie and Bunny are sort of homelike girls. They are, for their station in the drama, strangely grammatical and they never use the knife when the fork will do as well. They might be somebody's daughters. In fact, they are. But that is not our story.

I first met them at a party, where they were the joy and solace of the declining night; their laughter flowed like wine, and was as plentiful. I heard them say, "We're just a couple of 'Follies' girls!"

"How does it come," I said, "that two human intelligences got into one 'Follies' chorus?"

"We laughed ourselves in," said Brownie.

"And sometimes," said Bunny, "we think the joke was on us."

"Franklin two-one-two-oh," I said a few days later.

"Give me eight-ten," I said.

"We aren't supposed to ring that room till three," said the voice at the Sherman, "and it's only a quarter of."

"I am speaking for Mr. Ziegfeld," I lied.

"Oh!"

"Hello," said a sleepy voice.

"Good morning. I'm the man that said he'd write your interview. Is that you, Bunny?"

"No; Brownie—does it make any difference?"

"Not a bit. Where'll I meet you girls?"

"You pick some nice clean alley."

"How about breakfast?"

"I'm dieting."

"Make it the Drake, then," I magnificently said—"in thirty minutes."

"Make it forty," said Brownie. "We were dancing again last night. It'll take me ten minutes to bring Bunny back to life."

And forty-five minutes later—which I thought pretty good time—the girls were there, and crisp as pinks.

No blondes, Brownie and Bunny, but a brace of lovely brownheads; bobbed, of course; and their loveliness was so perfectly darkly dressed that I couldn't tell you what they wore under their squirrel and beaver coats if my life depended on it. Brown-eyed, both, and



Bunny's brown hair a shade-and-a-half darker than Brownie's. It was Brownie who was dieting, so I don't have to say that Bunny is the slightly slimmer. Oh, not that Brownie is too——!

I was interrupted in this contemplation by a question from Bunny——

"Do you think we look alike?"

"No—o."

"Thank you!" said Bunny.

"Thank *you*!" said Brownie. "When we wake up every morning, facing the same old faces, it's some comfort to know they don't look alike."

"Have you a cigaret?" said Bunny to Brownie.

"I'm going to get you a long cigaret holder—to keep you away from cigarets," said Brownie to Bunny.

"Don't expect me to laugh at that one before breakfast," said Bunny, powdering her grapefruit. "And, anyway, I have a dim recollection you pulled it last night."

"Let the dead night bury its dead," Brownie warned. "I was only rehearsing it last night. You don't expect me to pull anything on a critical audience like this without a tryout! I might get my part taken away!"

"*Your* part!" laughed Bunny.

"Just what are you distinguished for in the 'Follies'?" I asked Brownie.

"You know Jessie Reed?" she asked me.

"The 'Follies' beauty," said I, "over whose Titian hair Blythe Daly sighed rapturously when she said, 'Oh, Jessie, you're so Venetian!'"

"And Jessie answered, 'I don't think you're so damned good yourself!' I see you know Jessie," said Brownie. "Then you know she's the highest-salaried show girl in the 'Follies.' Well, I'm the lowest."

"Lower than Bunny?"

"Even lower than Bunny."

"Bunny," I said, tactlessly, "why are you more extravagantly paid than Brownie?"

"Because she wears a mask," flashed Brownie.

"But I don't get the extra salary for what I cover up in that scene," flashed back the one who doesn't diet to the one who does.

"Girls, don't mar one another!" I put in pacificatingly. "Tell me your story—how you came to go 'Follying'—I'll bet it's as interesting as 'Robinson Crusoe.'"

"*Crusoe*?" picked up Brownie, to whose zig-zag intelligence any word is a cue. "Who's going to be *Friday*?"

"Because," came Bunny, "I want to be *Saturday Night*."

"She's got a quick memory," said Brownie.

"Quick lunches have made me what I am," said Bunny, indolently assaulting the truffled omelet.

"I told you," said the incorrigible Brownie, "we ought to get up a gold diggers' union and cut out the one-armed chairs. A junior gold diggers' union, with rules and everything."

"What's a junior gold diggers' first rule?" I inquired, in the interests of literature.

Bunny thought a moment, while we watched her, and then she said: "Never accept books, flowers or candy from a—married man."

"If you can't get anything better," said Brownie, "take a bottle of perfume and you'll never be without a scent."

"And the first thing you do," said Bunny, "get your jewelry out of hock."

"Then," said Brownie, "buy yourself some clothes."

"And last of all," said Bunny, "when you can't think of anything else, pay the rent."

These daughters of night and laughter were not always so. The 'Follies' is their first show. Less than a year ago New York and Chicago and the Drama were not even dreams to them. They were Ohio home girls, friends since they were ten, wearing fraternity pins and going to bed at twelve.

But one day Brownie read a magazine and discovered that Columbus, O., was only a minor metropolis. She would investigate the world. She telephoned to her inseparable:

"Hello, Bunny. Wanta go to New York City?"

"Yes. When? To-morrow?"

"No; to-day."

"Sure!"

"And for four months in New York," Brownie told me, over her dietary crisp bacon and Melba toast, "life for us was just one party."

"Then," sighed Bunny, "our money gave out."

"And a nice man," Brownie went on from there, "who lived near us in New York and edited a smart magazine, said, 'Why don't you girls go into the 'Follies'?'"

" 'Why don't we go into the First National Bank?' I asked him.

" 'Oh, I'll introduce you to the 'Follies,' " the editor said, and gave us a note."

"We spent an hour," Bunny confessed, "deciding what we'd wear."

"Is the wear important when a girl seeks a place with Ziegfeld?" I was curious to know.

"Absolutely!" the two girls answered as one.

"And we had sense enough—I don't know where we got it," Bunny confessed—"to wear trim, tailory things and no paint."

"Our faces were almost nude," Brownie said, "when we went in and talked to Mr. Ziegfeld's Mr. Hope—another nice man."

"I'll say he was a nice man!" from Bunny.

"Nice as you," Brownie flattered; "and we talked to him much as we're talking to you. He said, 'Any experience on the stage?' And when Bunny said, 'Do we have to answer that?' he said, 'No; I don't think you do. So they're two little girls from Columbus, are they?' he went on, laughing to himself, 'And they're going to bust right into a show, are they? Well, you're the only girls with a sense of humor I've seen this Summer; stick around for a couple of weeks, if you can afford to live that much longer, and I'll see what I can do.'"

"It was three weeks after that," Bunny picked up, "that Ziegfeld, at one of those terrifying elimination rehearsals, saw Brownie sitting on a rail—trust her to pick a high spot! He called out: 'Hey! You! You girl from Columbus!' And Brownie jumped down, grabbed me by the hand and hauled me along with her. Trust her to do that too!"

"What did Mr. Ziegfeld say to you?" I asked Brownie.

"Which of you girls is the one from Columbus?"

"Both of us," I answered, and Bunny and I both laughed. So did Ziegfeld.

"All right," he said, "I'll take these two."

"Now," added Brownie, "you know why the 'Follies' have been successful this year!"

"They ran excursions when we visited Columbus," Bunny laughed.

"And the home papers printed us on the front page," said Brownie. "I felt sorry for Hitchy and Fanny Brice, doing—you know—the best they could. My soft Italian heart was touched."

"Brownie was born over here, but she's a Wop way back," Bunny interpolated.

"How many parents back?" I asked our Italian friend.

"Forefathers," she flashed.

"God love you, and keep you, Brownie!" applauded Bunny—"I can't afford to."





## Breakfast with a Perfect Lady



MISS PATRICIA COLLINGE'S was what I may call Irish hospitality—with tact and a bull in it. She invited you to luncheon and served you breakfast, which is the only possible meal between dawn and dinner for a man who works in the night and sleeps “beneath the sun.”

Those eggs! Those firmly poached eggs on a substructure of lean amber toast plated with anchovy! . . . . But I am not here to paint a still life nor inform a cook book. For that matter, my delightful entertainer did not attempt to acquire merit through a perfect breakfast. “I tell Blanche,” she said, as Blanche brought round the dish again and helped me help myself to another egg, “what I think I’d like, and Blanche tells me what she thinks I can have.”

Blanche, apparently, is the staff at Miss Collinge’s apartment, and a complete one. What with a staff in North Dearborn Street like Blanche and a play at the Blackstone like “Just Suppose,” Miss Patricia Collinge ought to be a very happy girl this season; and I told her so, and she told me she was.

But then I suppose it isn’t nice breakfast manners to talk about your own nice play the very first rattle out of the egg basket; and for a while Miss Collinge glistened with dewy delight in the freshness of “Dulcy,” the play of the bromide lady at the Cort.

“After seeing Lynn Fontanne in that diabolic

comedy," she told me, "I'm afraid to talk the good old bromides; I've lost the courage of my platitudes."

"Charles Collins told me he said a terrible thing at a party the other day," I told her. "When a lady said that some one had said she was just like *Dulcy* in the play, the demon critic, before he could catch himself, said, 'You are.'"

"I know," said Miss Collinge, in sadness as much as in mirth—"it was my party."

But let me tell you it was good for the soul and digestion to hear the acid bite of "Dulcy" intelligently praised by a girl who for three long years had suffered and prospered in the civilization-retarding optimisms of the honey-hearted "glad" girl in "Pollyanna."

"Where'd you get your soft southern speech for *Linda Lee* in 'Just Suppose'?" I was asking seriously enough, when she brought out a tiny scale of silvern laughter and cut me off with, "In Dublin, where I was born; I get all my accents there, and you know I do. I feel I'm irreparably Irish."

"But you're an American citizen now?"

"No," she answered without hesitation, then hesitated: "I've—I've put it off—thinking perhaps I'd marry and come into my naturalization automatically."

"Oh, yes," I said as lightly as I could, "I heard you were engaged. Who is the lucky"—(I wanted to say "stiff"; my whole vulgar heart was bursting with "stiff")—"man?" I finally contrived to utter; and found I didn't need my epithet after all. For she comfortingly replied: "I'm not engaged to any one. My last reported engagement," she went on with splendid gravity, "was to Charlie Chaplin."

"You're not going to——!"

"How can I tell? I've never met him."

"Who've you seen lately—that's interesting?"

"Sinclair Lewis and he's as wonderful as 'Main Street.' "

"Ah!"

"And his wife is adorable."

"Oh.—How's your mother?"

"Well, thank you, and in The East. When I told somebody you were coming today, that somebody said, 'What are you going to do for a mother?' "

"It's awfully cozy just as we are," I said and moved the cigarets.

"It is nice," said the girl who once was "Polly-anna's" gusher of "gladness"; and lighted one and puffed contentedly.

Never judge an actress by the parts she plays. Just the same, I should say that there is more of the real up-close Patricia Collinge in "Just Suppose" than there was in any of the sirupy sundaes that went before this male and meaty love story. Her pride, her wit, her wistful distinction have outlet in this (for two acts, anyway) beautifully written and always beautifully cast romance of the South. And we talked this over at a length which may not be indicated here.

"I've heard," I said, "that you went shopping for the soft southern speech of *Linda Lee*."

"I was on the lookout, I'll admit; I trailed Southerners who sounded 'right.' And one day in a New York shop I came upon a shopgirl whose speech was everything I desired. She had the most delicious southern accent. 'An F. F. V.,' I told myself, 'who lost all her money and came to work in this nice shop.' I looked at a lot of things I didn't need—just to hear her talk; I even bought some. At last I said:

" 'You're from the South?'

"‘No, I’m from Brooklyn,’ the girl said, beautifully, softly, southernly.

"‘But you must have lived in the South,’ I said, ‘before you went to Brooklyn, else how could you have such a lovely southern accent?’

"‘I’ve always lived in Brooklyn,’ she told me in the same delightful way—‘maybe it’s my false teeth.’”

I relished that almost as much as I relished an hour of improving and unprintable discourse on the Drama. But I could have kissed her where she smoked (not that!—but of course you know your Princess Pat even if you don’t know me) when, I forget just how, she herself used the phrase “glad girl,” and spoke it like one tasting poison. And when I asked her for her honest-to-God opinion of that sickening optimist, Patricia Collinge vindicated my high faith in her by saying:

“I always felt that if *Polyanna* lived near me I’d brain her.”

## Making It Up with the Bordoni



THE little word "bonehead" was not once spoken, up in Irene Bordoni's room, when, without any formal funeral, we buried the hatchet and sat down together like the lioness and the lamb. Some reader with a twelve-month memory may recall that that little word, descriptively applied by her to the intelligence of Chicago audiences, got itself written into my last interview with this lovely creature, causing her pungently to protest in print and me to reply politely if not infirmly.

But neither of us uttered the fatal word now, and I am sure that each secretly applauded the other for her and his tact. We had met the night before at dinner—at a laughing, joyous dinner where her words were brighter than her jewels—and she had said, in answer to my request, which came with the coffee:

"Another interview? Sure. On one condition: that you write what I say."

"Make it two conditions: that you say you say what I write."

She had laughed; and here we were—"together again," as George Cohan and Willie Collier used to sing after a season's separation; and the bonehead of our contention was never mentioned. You see, I had forgiven Bordoni for the loveliness of her performance in her new piece at Powers', "The French Doll"; and Bordoni had forgiven me for the rapture of my review of it in *The Herald and Examiner*.

"I should never have expected that review from the way you wear your face in the first row, so long, so blank, so dismal. I don't ask applause from a critic, I don't ask laughter," she went on, moving from her seat at the piano to a chair nearer to me and rhythmically rocking a gemmed slipper in the bar of late afternoon sunlight that fell across her living room in the Congress Hotel, "but I do ask for a smiling face. And you were so cold. Ugh! It was a face of hard snow."

"That must have been when you were in a love scene," I said, "and I was trying not to cry."

"But I did not know that then," she sighed. "I looked at you and I said to my companion on the stage, under my breath: 'Look in the front row there at my enemy, so cold, so cruel-faced!' And my companion, he say: 'Don't mind him. Look at the lady with him and be happy!'"

"And I look at her with her beautiful smiles and her glad eyes and I was a little happy. 'Maybe,' I say to myself, 'she will reflect some of her happiness on my enemy.'"

"I couldn't believe it when I read the paper next morning. I cry—almost. And when I tell my husband over the long-distance in New York—for he had been greatly worried because what you might say about our opening, with your great enmity for me—when I tell him he say, 'Ha! now I suppose he is your frrrrriend!'"

She said "friend" as only a Frenchwoman can, and I swelled visibly in the implication.

She was beautiful today in black crepe bordered with bronze. A single garment it seemed, and cut by a master sculptor. Her sky-slanted nose, tiny red-rose mouth, strong beautiful white teeth that could kill a careless critic in one bite, firm unsubdivided forward



chin and big brown humid burning eyes, fairly trilled in the golden sunglare. Yet I felt it my duty to say, and I said, "Bordoni, why do they advertise you this season as a beauty?"

"My press agent, a very smart man, he say," she answered lucidly, "that the public they don't care a damn about a good play, but that they will come to see a beautiful woman."

"Do you think you're a beautiful woman?"

"Oooooooh! perhaps no. But maybe I have a personality. I don't think I am beautiful—no—but—well, they say you can't see yourself! Anyhow, I believe more in personality than in beauty. It is the same as in singing."

"Do you think you've got a voice?"

"Do *you* think I've got a voice?"

"No. But I'd rather hear you sing 'Do It Again' than Galli-Curci sing a whole opera."

"It is personality," said Bordoni.

"Not to mention art," said I.

"That is for you to say," smiled Bordoni.

"I'll tell the—what is that immortal line in your play?" I asked Bordoni, just to hear her say it.

"I'll tell the cock-eyed world!" she laughed.

"Do you always wear your hair like that, in a Bordoni bang?"

"Always. And before me my mother. When I was so young I can hardly remember she cut it off in front—snip! You must see our picture." She fetched it out of an old book of Russia leather. "See my mother and me with the same bang. See me here in my communion dress, with all the hair hanging down my back." She looked like a black-headed Sutherland. "I had a funny grandfather, too. When he take me walking he sit me down on a bench first and let down

my hair and tie it that way with a big ribbon, so all the world see his granddaughter's hair.

"But my mother tie it back when I go to school," she raced. "She tie it all back but the bang. And the teachers want to tie that back, too. Because they very clean in the French schools and do not want anything get into the pupils' heads but what they put there. But I say, 'No, you cannot tie back the bang. If you do I tell my mother, who will go to the department of public instruction and complain. The Bordoni family,' I tell the teachers, 'they always wear the hair this way, and we call it'—and I say it to the teachers in French—"the hair dressed like the dog."

"Are you coming to my concert next Friday?"

"Wild horses couldn't keep me from it. But why do you give concerts?"

"To hear myself sing in all the languages I know, and in Spanish, which I don't know. And to make money. I hope to make enough money in concerts not to have to go into vaudeville between plays."

"What's the matter with vaudeville?"

"Nothing. It's me what's the matter. I am all right for the downstairs. But the upstairs——" She hesitated, but she positively did not utter the word bonehead. "I am," she started all over, "too French, too Parisian, too, what you say? subtle for the upstairs of vaudeville. Is that the right word, subtle?"

"Yes, and the word was made for you," I told Bordoni, on whom a solitaire diamond ring bearing a stone so huge it might have had a name as well as an address, was the final note of subtlety. This crown jewel was cut flat on top, like a historied ruby; and it didn't flash, it burned; it was Bordonilike. "Why," I asked its wearer, "are French women so much subtler in what they wear than American women?"

She felt for the reason, found it, and phrased it perfectly. "The Frenchwoman has color-modesty. She won't," Bordoni went on, "wear a green hat with a red bag and an orange dress. Color is as delicate as perfume to a Frenchwoman of taste."

"Yet all the violent perfumes seem to come from France."

"It's the way they're used that make them violent," she countered. "I scent a handkerchief to-day for to-morrow's use—and then with, oh, such a little drop. Myself I perfume only in the bath, where most of it can be rubbed away—never sweet; never strong. People on the stage that have to come close to me say, 'I never smell anybody like that!'"

It was like a song, that last phrase, "I nevaire smell anybody like that!"—a French, jazzy companion-ditty to "Do It Again." But I didn't suggest melodizing the subtlety of scent. I thought of the classic "And I smell like Mary Garden, my God, ain't that enough!" and refrained, asking Bordoni only where and how she had got the rights to "Do It Again."

"I'll tell you how I got that song, after heartbreak and anguish," and she showed me the revolving whites of her eyes. "My husband's friend, George Gershwin, wrote it, and sang it to me, and said no, I couldn't have it for a play because he and his partner wanted to save it for a musical comedy and make a lot of money. I couldn't beg him, I couldn't bribe him. And then one day came the benefit matinee for the Jewish children, which Mr. Gershwin was handling. All his big stars which he advertise they send him telegrams to say they could not appear, and he telephone to me in tears to help him out. 'I'll do anything in God's world for you if you'll come and sing a song,' he said.

"'My dear friend,' I say, 'there's only one song

I like to sing at your benefit for the Jewish children, and that is your own "Do It Again."'

"All right, sing that—sing anything!"

"But,' I say, 'if I sing that once I want to sing that always. I want to put it in my new play.'

"But my partner——!"

"No the song, no the Bordoni!' I say, and stick to it. And five minutes, ten minutes later, he telephone back that it is all right with his partner and I can have the song for 'The French Doll.' So I sang it for the Jewish children's benefit and have been singing it ever since. But I don't sing it for the Victrola. They wouldn't let me—and you can't guess the reason why."

"Your voice?" I tried, timidly.

"Certainly not! It is a very good voice for the Victrola. But the good people who make the records they say the song is too naughty! What do you call people who say things like that—Vic, Vict——?"

"Victrolians," I helped out.

"I thought so," said Bordoni.

## Luck and Frank Bacon



KNEW Frank Bacon in San Francisco when a stock company paid him thirty dollars a week and overpaid drama critics with a like income didn't have sense enough to "see" the beautifully understated acting of an underpaid genius. But he bears no malice for that, saying we didn't think much less of him than he thought of himself—only maybe he enjoyed his work a little bit more than we did.

I used to meet him in O'Farrell street two or three times a week. More of an agriculturist than an actor he seemed to me; and he used to tell me slow, dry stories of his ups and downs, although I can't recall any of the ups. I remember vividly enough, however, that he never looked or talked like an actor, not even like the kind of an actor we wise young men of the West believed him to be.

I remembered this and reminded him of it when I went up to his room in the Blackstone, saying, "Frank, your success in 'Lightnin'' doesn't seem to have made you any more of an actor off the stage. You don't, as the temperaments say, seem to live your part twenty-four hours a day."

Bacon shook his silver head. His gentle lips smiled and his faded blue eyes blinked humorously behind their shell rims and under their overgrown brows. "Do you remember," he said, "a fellow you



interviewed once in San Francisco who played Abraham Lincoln in vaudeville—a fellow named Chapin?”

“I should say,” I said. “He wouldn’t see me anywhere but in his dressing room; and although it was Monday and no matinee, I found him there completely made up as Lincoln.”

“Chapin went to New York,” Bacon drawled, “and got to wearing a shawl on the street; and a fellow says, ‘That guy ain’t going to be satisfied till he’s assassinated.’”

Accounting for this success which he carries as lightly as his squint, Bacon warned me not to overlook the element of luck. “If,” he said, “one of Henry W. Savage’s actors—I can’t think of his name for the minute—hadn’t been held to his contract with a piece on the road I shouldn’t be playing *Lightnin’ Bill Jones* to-day.”

“I don’t make the connection, Frank.”

“You remember when I played the old inventor here in ‘The Fortune Hunter’ about eleven years ago? You ought to remember it, because you gave me a good notice—the best I ever got from you out on the coast was to be called a gum-shoe comedian, because I was so soft and slow. Not that this good notice was wholly deserved! ‘Mother’ had read it before she came out and saw the performance, after which she says to me: ‘What’s all this talk about? I’ve seen you do lots of things better in stock.’

“But what I started to tell you was that I had been fired out of that part in ‘The Fortune Hunter’ by the managers and was only kept because the actor they wanted to replace me couldn’t get away from a Savage show in time. And Shelley Hull was to have been canned, too. Yes, Hale Hamilton was booked to



play his original part. His trunk was packed. Then they discovered that the actor who was to have my part couldn't get away. So the managers said—I heard the story two years after, and Sam Harris didn't deny it when I one day brought it up—the managers said, 'Oh, let 'em both stay!'

"Hull and I happened to be the only ones of that outfit who lived to see their names in electrics—but never forget to figure luck! If I'd lost that chance I might never have had another; and I've often wondered what my next move would have been. I had come East with a small-time vaudeville sketch; I wanted to get a small position in the big time; I had no idea of trying for the legitimate. And when I got to New York about the only person I knew there was Jimmy Montgomery. You know Jimmy?"

"Yes," I said, refilling my pipe with imported tobacco, the first fatal taste of which was furnished me by the author and proprietor of "Irene"; "he's the millionaire who taught me to smoke beyond my means."

"He wasn't much of a millionaire when I first knew him; he was," said Bacon in that gum-shoe way of his, "leading man at the Central Stock Company in San Francisco, and used to board with 'mother' and me—many's the time I've gone into the kitchen and found Jimmy pressing his pants. Well, I looked Jimmy up in New York. He had a little part in 'The Fortune Hunter,' and he said, 'Frank, I think I can get you a good part for the Chicago production.' He went down to the Cohan and Harris office and insisted I was the fellow. . . . More luck."

"Frank, did you ever feel in the old days that you were a big actor needing only the chance?"

"No, I honest-to-God didn't. I think 'mother'

thought I had it in me, but I—I don't remember ever saying to myself, 'Some time I'll show 'em!' No, I was satisfied to be one of the also-rans. I liked the work; I was satisfied. I don't think I'm any happier today. The only difference, as I said to my wife the other day, 'the only difference, "mother," is that when the bell rings I don't have to ask you to go to the door to see who it is.'"

"Mrs. Bacon always had faith in you?"

"Well, most of the time. She even had faith in this play when I was peddling it from manager to manager and they were all telling me the public wasn't interested in the character of an old man and a failure to boot. But after 'mother' saw the first night at Atlantic City, where we played in too big a house, all she said, as we rode along the walk in a wheel chair, was: 'Well, Frank, is this what we've been building on these last three years?' . . . You know, anyway, she likes comedy a little more high-toned than 'Lightnin'."

"Mrs. Bacon doesn't say *Bill Jones* is the best you've ever done!"

"Not by a long shot! She'd rather see me in 'The Professor's Love Story.' She didn't believe the first night of 'Lightnin'' had set New York afire—neither did everybody else, and I was one of 'em. You know our company, with the exception of Miss Oaker and one or two others, was all raw western material that had never seen Broadway before. They didn't know anything about a rehearsed first-night audience, brought in on passes and instructed when to let go. But I told 'em not to let the laughter and applause go to their heads. I was wise. And when Mr. Golden, after the performance, asked me to come to the office to-morrow morning and get a few passes for friends

who might appreciate the show, I was wise enough to know he wanted me to get folks in there who could make a noise like applause. I was the wisest feller on Broadway that night. But when I went down to get the passes next morning at eleven, Eddie Dunne told me I couldn't have 'em because the whole house was sold."

"What's the smallest salary you ever got, Frank?"

"Well, I got thirty the first year at the Alcazar in San Francisco, and then the managers called me into the office and said I'd done such good work they were going to raise me. They gave me thirty-five. But I got less than that when Pershing first saw me."

"General Pershing?"

"Yes; he was a lieutenant then, stationed at Fort Baird, N. M., when I played there with a barnstorming company that never had any salary day. We started out with eleven people, and I was number eleven; but by the time our company was diminished to five I'd been promoted so many times I found myself leading man. I remember our manager got awfully sore at Fort Baird because we played, as it was called, on credit. That is, we let the soldiers in on tickets given out by a sergeant, the price to be deducted from the soldiers' next pay. They'd had a pay day just before we arrived, and the manager was sore all the way through when he found they got their pay only three times a year—because we'd had a good house, two hundred and thirteen dollars, and only thirteen dollars of it was cash."

"But where does Pershing come in?"

"Many years later—at a performance of 'Lightnin'' and a banquet in his honor in New York. I had changed my little curtain speech after the second

act and made it more of a soldier talk than usual. I was getting along pretty well when the horrible thought came to me—remembering vaudeville—that I hadn't got my 'exit.' How was I going to wind up my speech? Just then the voice of an angel whispered it to me: 'General, I salute you.' And turning to him where he sat in the box of honor, I said it and gave him the salute. And," Bacon finished with a pardonable thrill, "Pershing rose and stood at attention as I left the stage."

"Then you and the general got to talking at the banquet and——?"

"Yes—he remembered the barnstormers."

"But not the man who was going to play *Bill Jones*?"

"No more than I remembered the lieutenant who was going to win the war."

"And that's how you became an actor?"

"No; started with Warfield; and was a newspaperman first."

"Great heavens, Frank, you wouldn't lie out of your part!"

"Don't have to. I was a newspaper man. I solicited ads for the *San Jose Mercury*, started a paper at Mountain View, and bought one, a daily, in Napa. It was while I was running the one in Napa that Warfield came along, barnstorming with Fanny Wood, and I made my first professional appearance with him as *Dan* in 'The Streets of New York.' And I guess I thought about as much of his acting then as he thought of mine."

"What's the secret of acting, Frank? You're fifty-seven; you've got 'Lightnin'' behind you and before you; you ought to know. What is it?"

He thought a moment. Then he said: "Learn all

you can about acting, and then don't do it. What you do in a play is what you don't do."

"Is that the way you act *Bill Jones*?"

"I think so. *Bill's* the easiest part in the world to play without playing, because he's pretty true—and if you're tired he gives you lots of chances to lean. Did you ever see a cuss could lean more'n *Bill*?"





## An Unprintable Interview With Miss Cowl



ELL, girls, you won't have to write to me any more about *that*. I'm doing it now—I'm interviewing your beloved Jane Cowl for you. And, my dears, you should see the setting!

Private dining room on floor A of Blackstone. Nuts and ferns and everything on a round table big enough for ten. Eight gold chairs idling against the walls. Two gold chairs side by each at the east sector of the table, and in 'em Jane and me—just Jane and me.

It is dinner and she wears her pearls, and is as pretty as any lucent one of them. Yours devotedly wears nocturnal patent leathers and what he fancies goes with them—and hopes, he fondly hopes, that the pressed suit doesn't emit an odor of recent gassing.

But there is an odor—the tell-tale fume of a pipe. In the excitement I've declined a cigaret at the hands of the master waiter and unpocketed my plebeian smoking instrument. Now what to do with the infernal thing! I try to laugh like a man of the world, but it is very hollow.

"Forgive me," I say in a voice that mother wouldn't know, "forgive me," I say with arch humor, "if I appear to put my pipe on one of your gold chairs." And I do the terrible thing.

And she, gracious girl, with the hospitality of a duchess, she says:

"I think gold chairs should be reserved for that purpose exclusively."

I don't believe that the princess who was giving tea to the chiropodist at a charity bazaar, and promptly broke her own saucer and exclaimed, "How brittle they are!" when the unlucky foot artist thrust his elbow through a piece of royal porcelain—I don't believe that that princess was kinder than, and surely not so witty as Jane Cowl is when she puts gold chairs in their proper place to make my poor pipe and me feel comfortable at her feast.

And yet she tells you that she doesn't know how to be interviewed by a chap like me (who gets so much serious theater when he's firstnighting that he sometimes believes the queens of the stage should write it themselves when they have solemn inspirations on the subject of *The Drama*). Yes, Jane says she fears she's not the sort of person that makes good reading next to pure Lardner—or words to that effect.

"I'm afraid of you when you 'kid'," she says—while I'm trying to make out which fork goes with fish with fried almonds on it.

"How do you figure forks?" I ask, helplessly—both the master waiter and just the waiter are beyond hearing.

"Work from left to right and let the knives take care of themselves—only that silver dirk is your butter knife," my perfect hostess answers—and you feel sure that she will keep your secret.

"What's the name of the fish?" you whisper.

"Pompano," says Jane, very softly; the master waiter is near.

"Ah, yes, pompano," I say with full, enriched voice. "He's always been one of my favorite fishes; even superior to the sand-dab, don't you think, Miss Cowl?"

"He could lick the sand-dab any day in a stand-up fight," says Jane, splendidly—"he's twice as big."

And yet this girl who can co-write plays as humanly as she acts them will sit on a gold chair and tell you that the lighter, the colloquial, the catch-as-catch-can interview (I try to think of it as the human interview) is not for her!

Listen, girls—it's coming out how Jane's histrionic talent was first exhibited to the world; it's coming out with the—wait till I ask.

"Jane," I say, "what is this delectable bird?"

"Guinea fowl—I couldn't get any prairie chicken."

"And the ebony trimming?"

"A mere truffle," says Jane.

So there you know what it's coming out with.

"I'm Boston born," Jane confesses, "and mother used to drag me home from New York on the Fall River boat—to show the relatives what a big, nice girl I was for three. And one day on the boat she lost me; she lost me for thirty minutes. And just when they were going to stop the boat and drag the river, mother found me—in the *salon*. I was holding a derby hat half full of money and was surrounded by a hundred laughing men.

"How did you get that money?" mother demanded.

"I showed her. I coughed and dramatically spat in, or at, one of the large bright brass cuspidors that ornamented the *salon*. I had, it seems, been strangely interested in the expectorant feats of an elderly tobacco-chewing gentleman. I had followed and

mimicked him from one polished brass American institution to another. And when he had desisted and my large audience wanted me to go on with my imitation, I had answered with precocious thrift for an actress of three:

“‘I’ll ‘pit for a penny.’

“Hence the hat and the money. But you can imagine,” laughs Jane, “the job mother had trying to restore the gross receipts of my first public performance!”

Jane has acted it as she warms to her story—finding a new employment and disesteem for the gold chairs.

“It’s so funny my side hurts,” I say, when I stop laughing.

“It is funny,” Jane admits—“but of course you can’t write anything like *that*. So there,” she sighs hopelessly, “we are!

“That’s as unpublishable,” she goes on, “as my visit in Paris to the house of the famous actor De Max. I’d seen his wonderful performance; I’d seen him driving in the Bois with wonderful blue ribbons for lines; and nothing would do but that I, an ambitious votary in the theater, must be taken to him.

“So a man took me to the home of De Max, where a formal servant admitted us to the drawing room. And my God, Ashton, when De Max came to greet us he was naked! I give you my word of honor he had on nothing but a small leopard skin round his hips—not even leopard-skin pants!—just a small and loose leopard skin! You can imagine my feelings.”

“He was an informal guy,” I say, sympathetically.

“Informal is right,” says Jane. “Right then this French gentleman had his dinner brought in on a tray, and he ate it in front of us without asking us to

have as much as a cup of coffee. It may have been all right, but it's not my idea of Spanish hospitality."

A touch of serious theater is, I fear, working in. Jane is telling me how she suffers on first nights, how she wishes she could "open" just "for people" and not have to face New York's hideous "death watch."

"They had me licked in the first act on the first night of 'Smilin' Through'," she tells me passionately and colloquially. "Those body-snatchers wouldn't have me at any price. My performance became a battle, a fight, a scrap. Well, I got 'em in the second act and in the last act I had 'em standing on their hind legs—but it took twenty years out of me."

"You don't look it," says I, bright as a gilt chair or a brass institution.

It's so feeble she is compelled to laugh, and is somehow reminded of a couple of treble youths whom she describes as "sweet cookies." These nancified lads were at the historic premiere of "Smilin' Through," and this is a bit of their conversation as it was reported to Jane (O girls, I wish you could hear her mimic them!):

SWEET COOKIE (*contralto*)—Well, she holds them, doesn't she?

SWEETER COOKIE (*altissimo*)—Holds them? My dear, she clutches them!

For dessert we have sublimated mousse baited with marons glacés—and cherry tart. (I insist on the cherry tart, although you might say that we don't really have it; you might say that we have only the spirit of it. Symbolists may read what they like into this chapter of the Cherry Tart.)

"I threw it at Dolph," says Jane, in a confession



of temperament; meaning by "Dolph" Mr. Adolph Klauber, manager, husband (Jane's), and one time distinguished dramatic critic of the *New York Times*. Then she retraces:

"We were poor, Dolph and I, when we were married. And I was taking a hard-earned present of cakes and pastries to Mr. Belasco, who dearly loves 'em and whom I dearly love. And when Dolph sat flat on the whole purchase, scrambling it beyond salvage, I lifted up the first item to hand and threw it at him. It was a torn and bleeding cherry tart and he got it, literally, in the neck.

"But you should have heard Dolphy tell it," she goes on, generously. "I heard him one night, at the American Dramatists', when they honored me with a dinner. I never was so puffed out in my life; I'd never heard such adulation—even the telegrams from the absent. One of these telegrams said, 'I never think of Miss Cowl without thinking of the phrase, "How far that little candle throws its beams!"'

"Dolph's speech followed that. He said he didn't know how far I could throw a beam, but he did know how far and accurately I could throw a cherry pie, and he told the story, unsparingly.

"Jane," says I, brightly, "is Dolph the only critic you ever pasted with a pie?"

"I regret to inform you that he is," says my perfect hostess, signaling the entire dinner party to rise.



## Ambushing the First Actress



HERE on mother's desk is Cousin Minnie's veil, and I think I'll keep it. Some ladies leave their cards when they come to call on mother, but she always leaves a veil. It is a very large one, and of that faded cobalt which the fashionable now call "old blue." It is slightly tattered—which makes it the more authentic. Yes, I think I shall keep it. And when some young actress calls and has been very, very good, I will permit her to kiss this old blue veil of Mrs. Fiske's.

The interview was had by stealth and force. The tea was two cups old when I emerged from ambush, saying, "What you have just said to mother is just what I want you to say for me!"

"Who is this strange man?" she cried, not with utter happiness. "And what was it I was just saying that could have been of the slightest interest to you?"

"You were saying, dear lady, that all this talk about Youth is piffle."

"Impossible! I may have said that it was overrated."

"All right, overrated. But you *said* piffle, and I loved you for it. You know what the president of Harvard said about the president of Yale?"

"No. I was not in his confidence."

"He said the president of Yale never went to bed—he always retired."

"The president of Yale was perfectly right," she gorgeously affirmed with the witchery that I have

adored for twenty years—with the witchery which she will not turn on to order. “And if I must be interviewed—and I don’t see why—let it be some other day when we can——”

I interrupted the First Actress with a hoarse and ignoble “No!” She is, I told her, when it comes to speaking of or for herself, the foremost of procrastitutes. Hadn’t we, I wanted to know, only a season or two ago, spent futile hours plotting an interview that was to make Plato’s transcripts of Socrates look like thirty cents?”

“I don’t understand you, Mr. Stevens,” she ironically smiled.

“And didn’t you finally say, ‘You should not attempt an interview with a woman who knows as little of the theater as I’? Whereupon I wrote one with a distinguished lady of the chorus.”

“Did you? Well, that sounds plausible—But not now, please, for this one. Say . . . day after tomorrow at——?”

“You were saying,” I implacably repeated, penciling it on a pad, “that all this talk about Youth is piffle.”

“Overrated,” she sighed. “Youth, I said, is the time of blunders, stupidities and egotisms. It takes all the rest of one’s life to correct the mistakes of youth. And it’s such a silly, selfish time, youth— isn’t it true? Agree with me and we can continue this conversation indefinitely.”

“It is,” I answered, flatteringly reconciled to the ripe and middle years.

“How youth exaggerates its self-importance, its ambitions! And what wise things I’m saying! Perfectly stupid! They’ve been said a thousand times and

a thousand times better. Tell me something: Mother says you're having a book published—what about it?"

"Yes," I confessed, "we're calling it 'Actorviews.'"

"Um! Comprehensive; very comprehensive." She sipped her tea and characteristically tapped the rug with the tip of her toy-sized boot. "And how many of the old interviews you wrote in San Francisco and New York shall be in the book?"

"None."

"Why not?"

"They don't seem to be so——well, Cousin Minnie, the truth is they seem to be written worse than the later ones."

"There's my point!" she melodiously laughed. You write better now because you're not so selfishly, stupidly, ambitiously, blunderingly, egotistically young. One writes better with years—no doubt of it."

"And——?"

"And I suppose you want me to say acts better, too, just as the painter paints better? And I'll say it, very stupidly, but with profound conviction: One acts better when one's not too miserably young."

It is rapturous fun, growing old and wise with Mrs. Fiske, to whom years bring only flavor. But I wish I could translate to this page something of the buoyancy of her body, not to mention the less translatable magnetism of her mind. . . . She is as honest as the sun, and as inscrutable as the stars. She, who has made the drama clearer and saner by her interpretation of it, is in herself (and I sometimes think, to herself) just a little bit mysterious. She is a mystical humanist; more, she is a mystical humorist.

She knows more about the art, science and craft of play-acting than all the rest of us put together in a

night school, but she does not talk readily of its ways and means. She has no glib maxims on acting, no frothy formulas. I once heard her say, when we were at a play together where a player had been applauded on his exit, "It's an actor's own fault when the audience applauds him!" But I don't think I ever have heard her say that acting is so or such.

"Do characters come to you in flashes, or bit by bit?" I asked. And she just looked at me out of her large violet-blue eyes, a little pleadingly, perhaps, to say this was a dull and heavy price to pay for a cup of tea.

But I persisted. "How was it with *Becky Sharp*?"

"*Becky* jumped at me out of the pages of the book. But many characters," she went on slowly (for her), "have to be made . . . when the author hasn't been vivid . . . as Ibsen is vivid . . . I was rereading him last Summer . . . 'Rosmersholm,' 'Hedda Gabler' and 'The Pillars of Society' . . . oh, it was bracing!"

"You were rather 'off' Mr. Ibsen last time we talked," I rather pusillanimously reminded.

"Possibly. It was no doubt the insolence of immaturity."

"He has become important to you again?"

"Much more important than ever. I see things in 'Rosmersholm' that makes me feel I must have been blind. And in 'The Pillars'——! That little bit of a tiny part of *Lona Hessel*——! She's very short, but the most beautiful rôle in all literature; she seems to me to be the last word in purest womanhood. . . . Yes, Ibsen was much more interesting to me last Summer. But that, you see, was because I was older! . . . Youth!" she derided "Fiddlesticks!"

"Tell me," I said, very seriously, "of your first remembered thrill in the theater."

Her long lashes danced and she said:

"It was when a beautiful blond leading lady took me to her bust, I mean breast, and called me her darling child. . . . Beautiful blond leading ladies always were doing that to me when I was a little girl. At that time I was invariably employed to reconcile parted parents by saying, 'Mama, kiss papa.' "

"You had no sense then of the stage's relationship to life?" I tried helpfully to put in.

"Nor of life's relationship to the stage," she turned it. "It was the life outside that seemed the artificial thing. I used to look out and down on life and think the performance enormously counterfeit. My world was peopled by stage hands, carpenters, grips, property men . . . and they were very real and very kind people. And, of course, the most wonderful hour was when my mother gave me soda water and cakes after the play. . . . But . . ."

"Yes?"

"I was just thinking . . ."

"What?"

"How I lied about that exquisite, flowerlike mother of mine."

"She was very lovely, very delicate . . . she was mostly soul," Mrs. Fiske went on, peacefully, her boot silent, her lids unwinking, "and I ruled her with a rod of iron. . . . It gave me great pleasure to tell strange ladies in the hotels, who took an interest in a precocious little scoundrel, that my mother beat and starved me. But I sometimes spoiled the drama of this by going too far and saying that she also made me work, made me make my own clothes, which were rather pretty and the sewing of which would have been considerable of a feat for a child of five or six. . . . But when I



remember how I lied when I was a very young actress, it makes me think that maybe Jane Addams and the ladies of the cruelty society were right last season when they prevented my coming to Chicago with the unsubstitutable children in 'Wake Up, Jonathan!'"

The tiny boot tapped and the long lashes batted a spark or two at this memory of stupid indiscrimination. But we didn't talk about *that*.

"What most delights you now in the way of acting?" said I.

"Oh, the unobtrusive thing," said she. "I find myself elaborating (but not too much, I hope), some unobtrusive thing that finds the heart . . . via the head. The deliberately exciting end of an act, the crash of the curtain, finds me a little cold. It's too calculated, I feel. . . ."

"I've never seen you play a 'love scene.'"

"And, what's more, my dear friend, you never will. I can't and I won't play a 'love scene.' And I don't know why I can't."

"It's your celestial sense of humor, of course, which would regard it as a sort of exhibitionism."

"All right," she smiled, "but please remember that wonderful word is your own!"

"When are you going to play Shakespeare?"

"*Juliet*?" she twinkled. "Can you imagine what I would do to *Romeo*?"

"Dear lady, as a solemn 'subject' you're a brilliant failure today."

"It's the tea. You must have put something in it. One more very solemn observation and I must go, really. Speaking of love scenes, a very wise and wealthy woman friend once said to me, 'My dear, I'd



give all I possess in the world to be in the audience and see your *Camille* hand the rose to *Armond*!

"I mean, of course," she added at the door, "not 'hand' but 'offer' the rose to *Armond*, which is much more elegant. Let me, like the president of Yale, retire!"



## INDEX



- Ables, Edward, 93  
 Adams, Franklin P., 254  
 Adams, Maude, 94, 140  
 Addams, Jane, 314  
 Ade, George, 6  
 Akst, Harry, 260  
 Alexander, George,  
     99, 175  
 Algood, Sarah, 38  
 ALICE-SIT-BY-THE-FIRE  
     98  
 Ames, Winthrop,  
     62, 139, 170, 238  
 Annunzio, Gabriele D',  
     160  
 APHRODITE, 246  
*Aphrodite*, 44  
 Archer, William,  
     176, 178, 179  
 Arliss, George, 173  
 Armstrong, Paul, 147  
 Astor, Mrs., 67  
 AS YOU LIKE IT, 150  
  
 Bacon, Frank, 295  
 Bacon, Mrs. Frank, 298  
 BALLAD GIRL, THE, 223  
 Barrie, Sir James M., 93  
 Barrymore, Ethel,  
     94, 97, 135  
 Barrymore, John,  
     51, 93, 99  
 Barrymore, Lionel,  
     31, 67, 127, 128  
 Barrymore, Maurice,  
     63, 98  
 Bates, Blanche, 111  
 Bayes, Nora, 255  
 Beerbohm, Max, 175  
 Belasco, David,  
     111, 139, 161, 247, 308  
 Bennett, Richard, 137  
 Berlin, Irving, 83  
  
 Bernard, Sam, 34, 259  
 BEYOND THE HORIZON,  
     137  
 Bloom, Ike, 101  
 BLUE BIRD, THE, 238  
 BLUEBEARD'S EIGHTH  
     WIFE, 56  
 BOMBO, 186, 191  
 Booth, Edwin, 159  
 Bordoni, Irene, 290  
 BOUGHT AND PAID FOR,  
     139  
 BOWERY AFTER DARK,  
     THE, 31  
 Brady, "Diamond Jim,"  
     202  
 Brennan, Jay, 113  
 Brice, Fanny, 221  
 Brioux, Eugene, 139  
 Briggs, Clare, 119  
 Broadhurst, George, 139  
 BROADWAY BREVITIES,  
     222  
 BROKEN WING, THE, 128  
 BUNKER BEAN, 154  
 Butler, Bunny, 277  
 Byron, Arthur, 56  
  
 Caldwell, Caldwell B.,  
     181  
 Calvé, Emma, 253  
 CAMILLE, 315  
*Camille*, 5  
 Campbell, Mrs. Patrick,  
     10, 99, 175  
 Cantor, Eddie, 138, 188  
 Carter, Mrs. Leslie,  
     6, 107  
*Chanticler*, 140  
 Chaplin, Charles, 90, 286  
 Chesterton, G. K.,  
     125, 236  
*Cio-Cio-San*, 170

- CIRCLE, THE, 5, 108  
 Claire, Ina, 55  
 Clarke, Harry, 257  
 CLAW, THE, 129  
 Cobb, Irvin, 120  
 Coghlan, Rose, 11  
 Cohan, George M.,  
     147, 183, 205, 222, 289  
 COHAN REVUE, THE, 255  
 COMMON LAW, THE, 132  
 Conrad, Joseph, 137  
 Coogan, Jackie, 120  
 Collier, "Buster," 95  
 Collier, William,  
     87, 99, 289  
 Collinge, Patricia, 286  
 Collins, Charles, 56, 286  
 Colosimo, "Jim,"  
     165, 167  
 CONCERT, THE, 18  
 Courtenay, William,  
     156, 157  
 Cowl, Jane, 268, 303  
 Craven, Frank, 9, 75  
 CURE FOR CURABLES, A,  
     154  
 Curtis, Brownie, 277  
 Cushman, Charlotte, 5  
  
 Daly, Arnold, 9, 147  
 Daly, Augustin, 91  
 Daly, Blythe, 9, 279  
 DAMAGED GOODS, 138  
 Decker, Georgiana, 43  
 DECLASSE, 98  
 De Courville, Albert, 69  
 De Leon, Milly, 265  
 Delmar, Ethel, 186  
 DIANA OF DOBSON'S, 140  
 DICTATOR, THE, 99  
 Dillingham, Charles,  
     69, 83, 114, 116  
 Ditrichstein, Leo, 15  
  
 Ditrichstein, Mrs. Leo,  
     16  
 Dooley, Ray, 221  
 Doro, Marie, 93, 154  
 Drew, John,  
     1, 108, 111, 238  
 Drew, Louise, 11  
 DU BARRY, 107  
 Dudley, Bide, 265  
 DULCY, 285  
 Du Maurier, George, 64  
 Duncan Sisters, The, 69  
 Duse, Eleanora, 160  
  
 Edison, Thomas, 117  
 Elliott, Maxine, 271  
 Elliott, William, 210  
 Eltinge, Julian, 115  
 Emperor of Germany,  
     The, 50  
 Erlanger, A. L., 34, 213  
 Errol, Leon, 188  
  
 FAIR CIRCASSIAN,  
     THE, 128  
 Fairbanks, Douglas, 117  
*Falstaff*, 175  
 Farwell, Arthur Burrage  
     102  
 Ferguson, Elsie, 23  
 FIRST YEAR, THE,  
     75, 76, 77  
 Fisher, Irving, 255  
 Fiske, Mrs.,  
     135, 251, 271, 309  
 Fontanne, Lynn,  
     193, 285  
 FOREVER, 27  
 FORTUNE HUNTER,  
     THE, 297  
 Fox, Della, 234  
 Foy, Eddie, 94, 259  
 Frawley, T. Daniel, 272



- FRENCH DOLL, THE, 289  
 FRIENDLY ENEMIES, 34  
 Frohman, Charles,  
     93, 138, 140  
 Garden, Mary,  
     13, 14, 105, 115, 245  
 Garrity, John J., 113  
 Gerard, Ambassador,  
     205  
 Gershwin, George, 293  
 Gest, Morris,  
     47, 114, 243  
 Gillette, William, 93  
 Gimp, "Colonel," 188  
 Gish, Dorothy, 155  
 Golden, John, 76, 298  
 GOLD DIGGERS, THE, 59  
 Goodwin, N. C.,  
     94, 147, 268, 272  
 Goodrich, Edna, 272  
 GRASSHOPPER, 33  
 GREEN GODDESS,  
     THE, 173  
 Grimwood, Herbert, 243  
 Grismer, Joseph, 139  
 GIPSY LOVE, 34  
 HAIRY APE, THE, 29, 125  
 Hall, O. L., 273  
 Hamilton, Hale, 296  
 HAMLET, 150  
*Hamlet*, 159  
 Hammerstein, Oscar, 246  
 Hammond, Percy,  
     141, 154, 221, 246  
 Hanaford, Maud, 195  
 HAPPY-GO-LUCKY, 9, 12  
 Harcourt, Cyril, 194  
 Harris, Sam H., 297  
 Hayes, Helen, 249  
 Hermes, Madame, 47  
*Herod*, 52  
 Hilliard, Robert, 183  
 Hitchcock, Raymond, 201  
 HITCHY-KOO, 201  
 Hodge, William, 156, 157  
 Hoffman, Aaron, 34, 35  
 Holmes, Frank, 187  
 Hopkins, Arthur,  
     34, 127, 274  
 Hopwood, Avery, 116  
 Houseman, Lou M.,  
     61, 230  
 Huban, Eileen, 33  
 Hull, Shelley, 296  
 HUMORESQUE, 121, 122  
 Hurst, Fannie, 121, 122  
*Iago*, 174, 175  
*Ibbetson, Peter*,  
     62, 63, 66  
*Ibbetson, Colonel*, 67  
 Ibsen, Henrik, 176, 312  
 IRENE, 165  
*Irene*, 166  
 James, Henry, 26  
 Janis, Elsie, 81  
 Janis, Mrs., 81  
 JEST, THE, 128  
 Johnson, Samuel, 125  
 Johnstone, Justine, 233  
 Jolson, Al, 138, 186, 245  
 JUDGE OF ZALAMEA,  
     THE, 19  
*Julie*, 24, 28  
*Juliet*, 314  
 JUSTICE, 64  
 JUST SUPPOSE, 285  
*Kantor, Mrs.*, 121  
 Kern, Jerome, 134  
 KING, THE, 16, 18  
 King of Spain, The,  
     70, 73

- Kipling, Rudyard, 216  
*Kitty, Lady*, 110  
 Klauber, Adolph, 308  
 Klaw and Erlanger, 29  
 Kolb and Dill, 131
- Lackaye, Wilton, 62, 252  
 LADIES' NIGHT, 153  
 Lardner, Ring, 222  
 La Rue, Grace, 203  
 Laurell, Kay, 240  
 Lawford, Ernest, 5  
 Leacock, Stephen, 236  
 LEAVE IT TO JANE, 131  
 Le Gallienne, Eva, 84  
 Lemaire, George, 138  
 Leslie, Amy, 146, 155  
 LETTER OF THE LAW,  
 THE, 128  
 Lewis, Sinclair, 287  
 LIGHTNIN', 295  
 LILIES OF THE FIELD, 153  
 LITTLEST REBEL, THE, 33  
 Lord, Pauline, 271
- Mackay, Elsie, 33  
 Mackaye, Percy, 94  
 MADAME SHERRY, 168  
 MAN FROM MEXICO,  
 THE, 92  
 Manchester, Duke of, 73  
 Mann, Louis,  
 34, 35, 94, 135  
 Manners, J. Hartley,  
 119, 123, 193  
 Mantell, Robert, 111  
 Marbe, Fay, 209  
 Marlowe, Julia, 111, 215  
 MATERNITY, 139  
 Maugham, W. S., 6  
 Mayo, Frank, 149  
 Mayo, Robert, 137
- McGovern, Terry, 31  
 McIntyre and Heath, 138  
 MECCA, 243  
 Meredith, George, 236  
*Merilles, Meg*, 5  
 Michelson, Miriam, 107  
 MILESTONES, 196  
 Miller, Henry, 111  
 MIMI, 170  
 Mitchell, Grant,  
 181, 183, 184  
 Mizner, Wilson, 147  
*Mogli*, 191  
 Montgomery, James,  
 165, 297  
 Moore, Florence, 33  
 Moore, Owen, 84  
 Moores, Clara, 153  
 Morosco, Oliver, 138  
 MUSIC MASTER, THE,  
 159, 161  
 MY LADY'S DRESS, 196
- Nash, Florence, 258  
 Nash, George, 93  
 Nathan, George Jean, 13  
 Neilson, Carlotta, 140  
 Norworth, Jack, 256  
 NOTHING BUT THE  
 TRUTH, 87
- Oaker, Jane, 298  
 O'Brien, Eugene, 268  
 OH, BOY!, 210  
 Olcott, Chauncey, 184  
 O'Neill, Eugene, 129, 273  
 O'Neill, Maire, 37  
 O'Ramey, Georgie, 131  
 ORPHANS OF THE  
 STORM, 211  
*Othello*, 159, 160, 161  
 Overman, Lynne, 263

- Page, William A., 250  
 PAIR OF PETTICOATS, A, 194  
 PARLOR, BEDROOM AND BATH, 33  
 PASSERS-BY, 137  
 Patterson, Joseph Medill, 137  
 Payne, Mary, 109  
 Payne, William Louis, 109  
 PEG 'O MY HEART, 119  
 Pershing, Gen. John J., 299  
 PETROUCHA, 64  
 Peyton, Corse, 92  
 Pickford, Mary, 120  
 PIERRE OF THE PLAINS, 139  
 PLAYBOY OF THE WESTERN WORLD, THE, 39, 40  
 POLLYANNA, 286  
 POT LUCK, 155  
 PRINCE THERE WAS, A, 181  
 PUDD'NHEAD WILSON, 149  
 Rambeau, Marjorie, 33  
 Reed, Jessie, 279  
 Rennie, James, 155  
*Richard II*, 50  
 Ridings, Harry J., 181  
 Rock and White, 203  
 Rogers, Will, 188  
*Romeo*, 111  
 Roth, Nat, 233  
 ROYAL SLAVE, THE, 224  
 Ruffo, Tito, 186  
 Russell, Lillian, 203, 233  
*Sand, George*, 271  
*Santuzza*, 170  
 Sargent, J. S., 99  
 Savoy, Bert, 113  
 Savoy and Brennan, 113  
 SECRET SERVICE, 176  
 Selwyn, Archie, 107  
 Selwyn, Edgar, 139  
 Shaftel, Walter, 102  
 Shakespeare, 51, 150, 174, 175  
*Sharp, Becky*, 312  
 SHAVINGS, 154  
 Shipman, Samuel, 34, 35  
 Shubert, J. J., 138, 259  
 Shubert, Lee, 138  
 Shuberts, The, 29  
*Shylock*, 159, 161, 174, 219  
 Sinclair, Arthur, 38  
 Singer, Mortimer, 65  
 Skinner, Otis, 111, 252  
 SMILIN' THROUGH, 307  
 SMITH, 6  
 Sothern, E. H., 62, 111, 215  
 SPITE CORNER, 76  
 Stone, Fred, 188, 258  
 STUBBORN CINDERELLA, A, 65  
 SUMURUN, 64  
 Sunday, Billy, 204  
 Synge, J. M., 39  
 TALKER, THE, 275  
 Tanguay, Eva, 105  
 Taylor, Josephine, 101  
 Taylor, Laurette, 119, 193, 196, 258  
 TAVERN, THE, 12  
 Tearle, Conway, 33  
 Thackeray, W. M., 64  
*Thais*, 14  
 Tinney, Frank, 188  
 TIP-TOP, 70

- TOO MANY COOKS, 77  
 Tree, Sir Herbert,  
     49, 135, 175  
 Tree, Lady, 198  
 Trevor, Norman, 194  
 Tucker, Sophie, 141  
 TWELFTH NIGHT, 52  
 Twain, Mark, 83  
  
 Valentino, Rudolph, 250  
 Vanderbilt,  
     Mrs. Cornelius, 70, 72  
 Vanderdecken, 161, 162  
 Van Loan, Charles, 88  
 VARYING SHORE, THE,  
     24, 26  
 VELVET LADY, THE, 213  
 Vernon, Marie, 184  
 Von Barwig, 159, 161  
  
 Wales, Prince of, 70, 72  
 Walker, Mildred, 43  
 Warfield, David,  
     94, 111, 159, 174, 258  
 'WAY DOWN EAST, 139  
 Wertheimer, Jacob, 206  
 West, Valerie, 132  
 WHAT EVERY WOMAN  
     KNOWS, 140  
 Wheaton, Anna, 210  
  
 White, George, 186  
 WHITE-HEADED BOY,  
     THE, 41  
 Whiteman, Paul, 186  
 Whittaker, James, 55  
 WHY MARRY?, 148  
 Wilder, Marshall P., 269  
 Williams, Bert, 138, 222  
 Wilson, Woodrow, 260  
 Winslow, Jed, 155  
 Winter, Dale, 165  
 Wood, Swan, 101  
 Woods, A. H., 29, 94,  
     132, 133, 139, 230  
 Wolhiem, Louis, 125  
 Woolcott, Alexander,  
     139  
 Wyndham, Olive, 33  
 Wynn, Ed, 188, 235  
  
*Yank the Stoker*, 125  
 Yeats, W. B., 37  
 YOU NEVER CAN TELL,  
     12  
  
 ZAZA, 107  
 Ziegfeld, Florenz, 69, 221  
 ZIEGFELD FOLLIES,  
     191, 277









